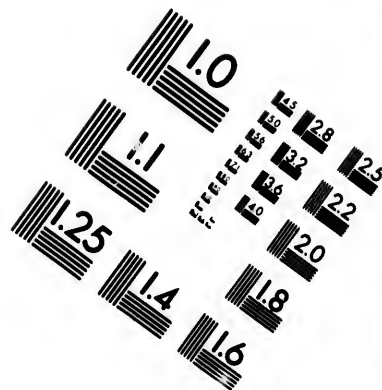
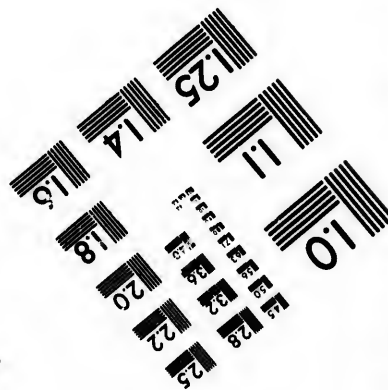
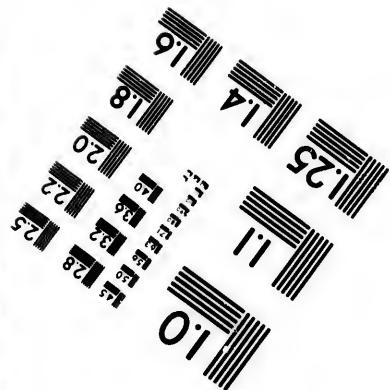
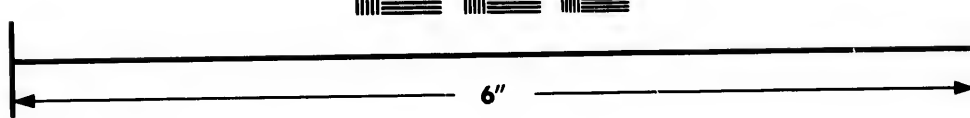




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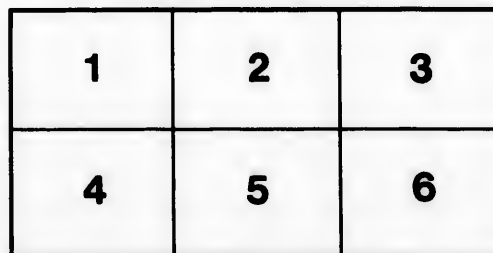
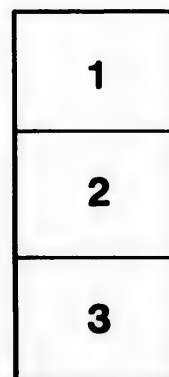
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SERAPH



"SHE RAISED THE VIOLIN TO HER SHOULDER."



SERAPH

THE LITTLE VIOLINISTE

BY ✓

MRS. C. V. JAMISON

Author of "Lady Jane," "Toinette's Philip," etc., etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY

FRANK T. MERRILL



JUL 3 1898

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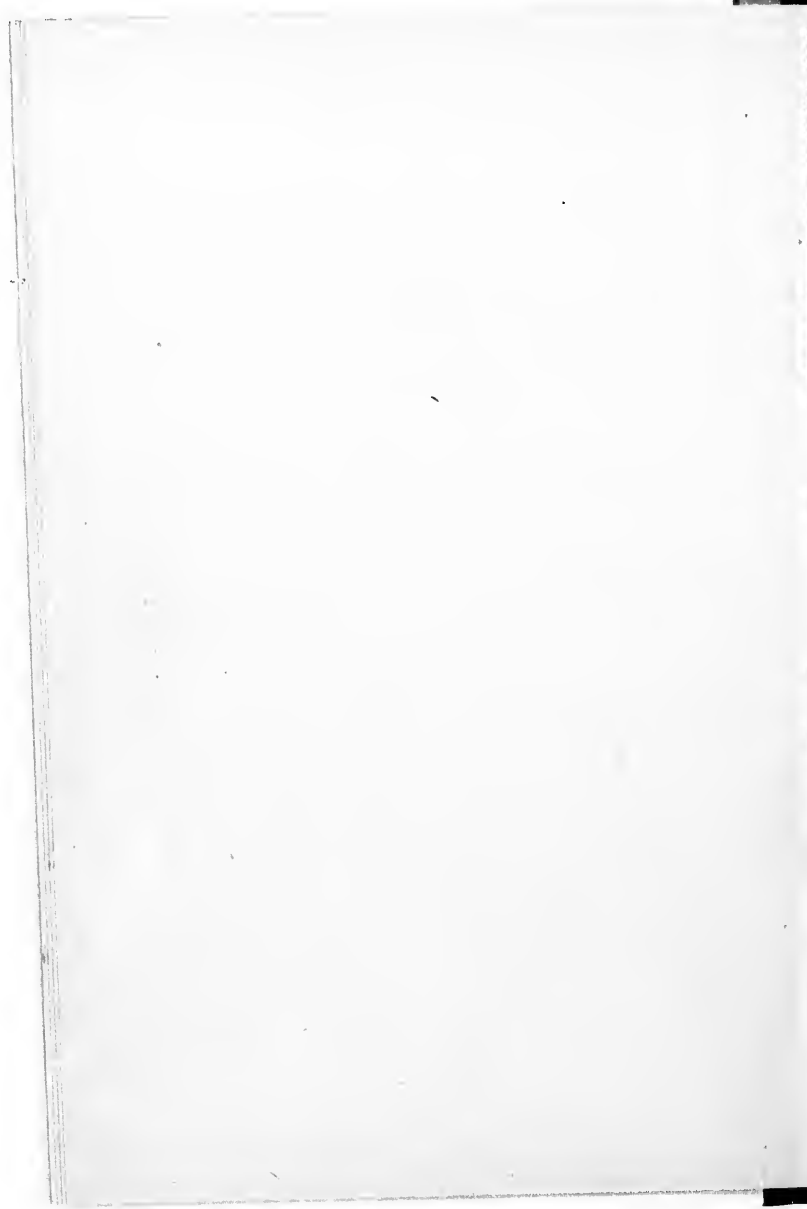
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SERAPH, THE LITTLE VIOLINISTE.

I.

UNCLE 'NIDAS.

MONSIEUR LEONIDAS NARDI had just returned home to New Orleans, to his little bookshop on St. Louis Street, after an absence of several months.

He had made the journey of his life, the journey he had dreamed of during his boyhood, when he had stolen a few moments from an exacting master to glance into the books of travel that helped fill the shelves in the little bookstore where, from a small, ill-paid, ill-fed drudge, he had grown to manhood, and where he had acquired the knowledge that for many years had made him the owner of the shop, as well as an authority on bibliography; where, at last, he had gained the wealth that enabled him to spend a few months in Paris, a city which, to see, had been, for long years, his hope and ambition.

He was a homely little man, with a benevolent, placid face, and a thoughtful, scholarly manner, — the manner of one who lives among books. In fact, in his neat brown suit, with his closely shaven, parchment-like face, he did not look unlike one of his own old-fashioned, russet-bound volumes. He had never married, and, as far as he knew, he had not a relative in the world; he lived quite alone in the high, narrow rooms over his shop, and having the gentlest, kindest nature that was ever given to one with no natural outlets for his affections, he worshipped books, music, children, and animals; he was *l'oncle 'Nidas*, the confidant and friend of most of the little ones in the neighborhood. It was really touching to see the joy of the children who crowded into his shop to welcome him home.

"Oh! *oncle 'Nidas*, you are welcome," they cried with one voice, clasping and kissing his hands.

"Ah! Lucie, *ma chère petite*, glad to see me back, *n'est ce pas?* and, my little pale Jacques, how is the lame hip, *mon enfant?* and Henri, the naughtiest of all, as red as a *crevisse*. Your maman has fed you well. Why, Fifine, your cheeks shine like cherries. *Oui, oui!* I've got something for you,

Nanette. Wait until I unpack my boxes, and you shall see. *Joujous?* Ah, *oui*, half the toys in Paris—I tried to remember you all. Now run away until to-morrow, and you shall see, you shall see."

Then there was Monkey, his little terrier, who sprang into his arms in wild delight, and his tiny marmoset, Toto, who sat on his shoulder and patted his cheek with almost human affection. And his mocking-bird, Flute, who tumbled from perch to perch as though he were dizzy, uttering a series of little cackling cries which sounded like immoderate laughter. They were all so happy, that even his old servant Cressy, an intelligent French quadroon, forgot to be formal and top-lofty while serving the dinner, and fluttered about nervously, clattering the plates and forks, an unusual occurrence for one of such severe decorum.

"Now, Cressy," said Monsieur Nardi, as he seated himself before a savory *fricassée*, flanked on one side with a dish of snowy rice, and on the other with his favorite salad of shrimp, "I feel myself at home again. I haven't seen such a *fricassée* since I went away, and such rice! Paris is a great city, a beautiful city, yet they can't cook rice there; but oh, the books! the books! They

can well afford to do without rice properly cooked when they have miles and miles of *old books*. Such books! Oh! I was intoxicated, I was greedy, to have them. Ah! Cressy, I am a *vrai bouquineur*. I spent my days, and most of my nights, in the *Quartier Latin*, and on the Quai Voltaire, and what a feast! I never thought of rice. Yes, I ate, I suppose I ate; but of what I don't remember. Perhaps it was good, but it made no impression. Well, I improved my time, and I brought back some treasures. When I unpack my boxes, you shall see. Now, Cressy, *ma bonne femme*, tell me everything that has happened in the neighborhood since I went away."

"*Par exemple!* Monsieur Leonidas, as if I could remember everything. But let me think—since you went away—let me think. Well, monsieur, Pierre has married the baker's widow, after all, and Madame the widow Tontine has gone to live with her daughter in the country. Then Heloise, the eldest girl of the florist, is *fiancé* to a *petit crevisse*, who earns only twenty dollars a month, and wears such a big pin in his cravat. A merciful Providence watches over the blind and the foolish, or such no account people would perish; and little

Jean, who is always in trouble, swallowed a dime. It stuck in his throat, and the doctor came to get it out, when luckily it went down, but his foolish old *tante* cried, because she had saved it for an offering and didn't want to lose it. Then Victor, the wood merchant, cut off his finger while making kindling, and the *bijoutière* on the corner was broken into while Madame was away; the thieves took a bag which they thought full of money, and there was nothing in it but rusty steel thimbles. The other day the old Italian cobbler across the way got a fine scare. He bought a dollar lottery ticket, and three nines came out; he looked at his ticket, and, ha-ha, he had three nines, so he ran, in his stocking feet, bare-headed, all the way to the *bureau*, and showed his numbers, trembling so that he couldn't speak. 'But, my friend,' the clerk said, 'these are three sixes; you looked at your ticket upside down.' The poor cobbler had to be helped home. *Eh bien*, he was too eager to get money without working for it. I wonder if I've thought of everything," and Cressy paused with her finger on her lip. "Why, no indeed, I came near forgetting to tell you that the cottage next door is let at last."

"*Vraiment?*" said Monsieur Nardi, with more interest than he had yet displayed while listening to Cressy's news. "It has been vacant so long; to whom is it let?"

"To a widow and her little girl, monsieur. The lady is very lame and never goes out."

"Do you know who they are? the lady's name, I mean."

"No, monsieur, I don't know her name; but I was told that her husband was a German who played the violin in a wonderful manner. He died a while ago suddenly, and they say that madame was a singer, or something, before she had a stroke of numb palsy."

"Ah! then she is unable to follow her profession," said Monsieur Nardi, between two mouthfuls of salad. "I hope her husband saved something, or they are likely to be very poor."

"Musical people never do take care of their money," returned Cressy, with an air of wisdom, "and I'm pretty sure that he was like all the others, for they didn't move much furniture, although it was good what there was of it, and a piano. These people must have music if they have nothing to eat. The only servant they have

is an old colored man. He's old, but they say he's a good cook, and a handy honest creature, and devoted to the little girl; and she, poor child, is that shabby that one can tell her clothes are made up of old scraps, although she's always clean and tidy. Yes, I'm sure they are poor, and I think they are as proud as they are poor."

"How sad for the child," murmured Monsieur Nardi. He was thinking of his own poverty-stricken childhood, and the little patched garments he had worn.

"Oh, she isn't sad; she's as gay as a bird, and she plays the violin like a little witch," returned Cressy, as she removed the plates. "From the window of your chamber you can look down into their yard and see that child cutting capers to make you die of laughing."

Just at that moment there came through the open window a long wailing note of a violin, which was followed by a rapid march, executed with such fervor that Monsieur Nardi swallowed the last drop of his *café noir* and mounted hurriedly to the room above, where he could command a view of the cottage yard.

II.

THE LITTLE VIOLINISTE.

APPROACHING the window cautiously, Monsieur Nardi looked through the "bowed" shutters, a surprised and interested spectator of a little scene which made him laugh softly to himself.

Before one of the low back windows of the cottage, a small platform was constructed of an old door laid across a couple of rough boxes. This was decorated at each end with the long swaying leaves of the banana, and over it, against the wall of the house, were fastened several blossoming branches of oleander and crape myrtle, the pink and white flowers blending prettily and making quite a bowery effect. While he was wondering at this fantastic arrangement, the faded red curtain at the window was drawn aside by an impetuous hand, and a picturesque little figure stepped out, with a long train, fashioned from a faded damask table-cover, trailing behind her. This was gathered in a bunch behind, and fastened under

a sash of frayed blue silk; a wreath of crushed pink roses fell over her long yellow hair; her scant white frock was decorated in front with faded flowers, and her small feet were covered with soiled white shoes much too large for them. In one hand she held a violin, which looked out of proportion to the slender little figure, and in the other the bow which she waved gracefully, bowing to the right and left, and smiling sweetly to an imaginary audience.

Suddenly there sounded a succession of hearty claps, dry and rattling, as though two sticks were struck together, and Monsieur Nardi's merry eyes, following the direction of the noise, saw another droll figure.

In the shadow of a great oleander tree, seated in an armchair, was an old white-haired negro, arrayed in the remnants of a dress coat, a tattered opera hat on his lap was filled with flowers, which he caressed tenderly with the long bony hands, that had rattled applause when the little violiniste appeared.

Slowly and graciously, with quite a professional air, the child approached the front of the small platform, and with another charming bow and

smile raised the violin to her shoulder, and leaning her soft pale cheek caressingly against it, seemed to whisper to it as if it were a human being. Poising the bow in the air for a moment, and bringing it suddenly down on the strings, she drew out a few wild discordant notes, then plunged into a rapid mirthful fantasie, so light and joyous, so full of soul-stirring hilarity, that Monsieur Nardi fairly shook with laughter. From that she floated off into a dreamy nocturne which she played with great expression and delicacy, the slender little fingers gliding caressingly over the strings while she seemed to whisper and smile into the very heart of the violin. After a few last chords drawn out in infinite sadness to silence, she raised her head and looked around triumphantly, her little white face full of passion, her dark eyes beaming with excitement.

Then the strange audience of one struck his bony hands together in rapturous applause, after which he showered his posies upon the happy little violiniste, who smiled and bowed with her hand on her heart after the manner of older artists. When the old hat was emptied of its fragrant contents, the little girl gathered in her

arms as many of the flowers as she could carry, and turning with a graceful sweep of her table-cover train, she gravely raised the red curtain and disappeared through the window.

When she was gone, the old negro rose stiffly from his chair, and taking off the shabby coat, he shook it, and looking at it critically, muttered, "Anoder split down der back, an' dat sleebe mos' tore from top ter bottom. I can't get inter it many mo' times eben to please dat chile."

Then with shaking hands, he slowly and carefully folded the dilapidated garment, and carried it with the hat into the small back room that served him for a chamber. After that he lifted the chair laboriously, and slowly hobbled with it toward the cottage, still muttering to himself.

"Bress my soul, I's a gettin' ole, too ole ter play wid chil'ren, an' my ole han's is dat stiff an' sore in der jints dat I can hardly clap no mo' fer dat chile, an' Miss Seraph 'spects it jes' es if it was real, an' loud, loud, jes' es if I was a whole aujiance, an' it's mighty hard to tote dis yere heaby chair back an' fo'th jes' ter please her. As if I couldn't set on a ole bar'el an' frow dem flowers an' play I was der aujiance widout

strainin' inter dat ole coat of her pa's, an' tirein' out my old bones a settin' up straight in her ma's bes' chair. But ole unc' Romeo can't 'fuse dat chile nofin. If she wanted dat pianner toted out yere, I'd have ter try to do it jes' ter please her, an' it's a won'er she don't. I's 'feared ebery time I rigs up dat platform, I 'spect sum day ter year, 'Unc' Romeo, we's got ter habe dat pianner out yere,' an' I's a studyin' how's I gwine ter 'fuse her. Now her ma's done tuk wid der numb palsy in her feetses an' can't walk, an' her pa's dade, she's on'y got me ter wait on her an' 'muse her, an' I's willin', I's willin', but I's gettin' awful ole an' stiff."

When the old negro had finally hoisted the heavy chair up the steps of the little gallery, and disappeared within, Monsieur Nardi straightened himself, with a long sigh, and turned, somewhat reluctantly, from the window. He would have liked a sequel to the little comedy.

The scene that he had witnessed affected him strangely. The beauty and remarkable talent of the child and the touching devotion of the old servant impressed him as something of more than ordinary meaning. Unexpectedly he seemed

to have come face to face with his own past. The sadness and pathos of the nocturne had entered into his soul, and the small pale face of the child brought back scenes that his heart remembered.

In the half-hour that he lingered near the window, he seemed to have gone back more than forty years to that time, those scenes, that still haunted him with their undying sweetness. With a sigh of tender regret for his lost youth, his dead hopes, he closed the shutter, and descended thoughtfully to his shop.

III.

PETITE MAMAN.

WHILE the pretty little maiden was masquerading in the back yard, under the admiring eyes of Monsieur Nardi, her mother, Madame Blumenthal, was sitting alone by the window of her dull little room, looking out into the small flower-tangled garden and narrow dusty street beyond.

At the first glance one would have thought her a child, so small and frail did she appear, sunk in a big armchair, with her helpless feet on a stool. She wore a white *robe de chambre*, very plain but clean and fresh, and over her poor feet, which were always cold, was spread a thick red shawl. Her face was pretty, a faded delicate prettiness. Soft curling blond hair lay in damp rings over her blue-veined temples, her eyes were large and light, with a timid, startled expression, and her mouth, although drooping in curves of suffering at the corners, was gentle and refined; her thin

little hands lay folded on her lap with an air of extreme weariness and dejection; the tips of the slender folded fingers looked like the petals of a flower dyed with rainbow colors.

Before her stood a table covered with scraps of silk and muslin of every hue, together with bunches of leaves of various forms and colors, from pale to dark green, bronzed, flushed with crimson and ruddy brown. There were rose leaves, leaves for violets and pansies, slender lily stems and foliage, mossy tendrils, and graceful vines, mingled with bunches of wire, spools of silk, and balls of thread of many tints and sizes. In front of her were a number of tiny saucers, the bright blotches of paint still fresh on them, and a row of little bottles of liquid color which glowed like jewels when the sun struck them.

On the same table stood a basket filled with exquisite artificial roses clustered artistically among folds of pale green tissue paper. The slender red-tipped fingers of Madame Blumenthal had just put the finishing touches to them and packed them ready to be sent to Madame Croizet, the *modiste*, on Rue Royale. The basket of flowers had an air of completeness and dainty

freshness that was not in keeping with the littered table, the somewhat untidy room, and the faded, weary look of its silent occupant.

Suddenly the door that led into the rear of the cottage was opened with a rush, and the little violiniste entered, flushed and excited. She had unfastened her table-cover train, and it was hanging to her sash by one corner. She carried her violin under one arm, and with her disengaged hand was hurriedly removing the wreath from her hair.

Madame Blumenthal, without turning her head, closed her tired eyes, and pressing her stained finger-tips to her forehead, sighed audibly, "Gently, gently, Seraph. I'm so tired, and my head aches so. Oh, oh, what a sight you are! Put that trash away and come to me."

"*Oui, petite maman*, I'm coming. Just let me put my violin away, and my *toilette* must be folded and laid in my drawer."

"Really, child, you are too ridiculous with those rags," returned her mother pettishly. "I wish you would spend the time you give to that nonsense at your piano."

"Oh, *maman, chère petite maman*, don't say

that; please don't. You wouldn't if you had heard how well I played to-day," cried Seraph joyously, as she drew a faded green cover over the violin and laid it carefully in its case. "My *musicale* was a great success. The house was full, and didn't you hear the applause? and there were so many beautiful flowers. It was lovely, *chère maman*. Won't you let Romeo wheel you out to my next *musicale*? Oh, do; I play so much better with a train, with flowers, and all that; it's true, *chère*, I *feel* the music more, and the violin feels it and just talks to me. It's lovely, lovely, and I am so happy."

"Hush, child; hush; you know how it hurts me to hear you talk so absurdly. You know I detest that violin playing; I don't want you to play the violin; I want you to play the piano. How will you ever be prepared to teach the piano if you waste your time playing on the violin? Seraph, my darling, don't worry me; do as I wish; practise on the piano and leave the violin. It's not the instrument for a girl. You can't teach the violin when you are grown, and you must earn you bread by teaching. You *must* give up the violin and devote yourself to the piano."

All the light faded out of the pale little face of the child, as she listened to her mother's soft, imploring voice. She did not reply, but went on busily folding the veil and the soiled white frock.

"Do you hear what I am saying, Seraph?" continued Madame Blumenthal impatiently. "You have disobeyed me again to-day. You have not practised your scales, as I told you to do. I shall be obliged to take the violin from you in order to make you study your piano lesson."

"Oh, *petite maman*, please don't do that," cried Seraph, in a tone of entreaty. "I will practise the scales; yes, mamma, I will, but you must, you must, let me keep my violin; I love it. It is like something living, and the piano is only a square box to sit before and jangle, jangle, up and down the cold hard keys, with fingers that feel like sticks, while my violin is my little friend. I can put my face down to it; I can touch it with my cheek; I can whisper to it, and it whispers back to me. Oh, mamma, can't you understand how I feel about it? It was papa's; he loved it, he touched it, he whispered to it, and it is, next to you, *chère petite maman*, the very dearest, the only dear thing, I have."

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"Yes, yes, child; yes, Seraph, I know. Oh, I know, my poor little darling; it is natural that you should love your father's violin. It was a passion with him, but I must think of your future. I must do what is best for you, for your future. Cousin Franz says that I must make you practise the piano."

"Mamma, cousin Franz does not know how I feel. Cousin Franz loves to preach sermons, you love to make flowers, and I love to play the violin, *petite maman*. I heard cousin Franz tell you, one day, when he was talking about my music, that when Madge grew up she should be a teacher of German, because she had a talent for that language, and that one did best what one loved to do. Then why doesn't cousin Franz let me play the violin, when I can play it better than the piano?"

"Because, my child, there are some things we love which are harmful to us; then we are obliged to give them up. You are wasting your time with the violin. Cousin Franz wishes you to be a professor of the piano, so that when you are older you can earn money for yourself and your helpless mother."

"That is just what I intend to do, mamma; I mean

to be a great violiniste; I mean to play in public. I'm practising for that now, and everybody will come to hear me, and we shall have money,—yes, lots of money,—and you shall go to that great doctor in Paris, who will cure you so that you can walk again."

"Oh! my poor little one, those are dreams,—foolish, useless dreams," said Madame Blumenthal sadly, as she drew the child tenderly to her, smoothing her disordered hair and flushed cheeks with her stained fingers. "You are tired and excited now, so we will say no more about it. Calm yourself, and make yourself tidy; you must take the roses to Madame Croizet, and tell her, Seraph, and speak politely, my dear, that these roses are very difficult to make, and that I hope she will kindly pay me something extra for them. And ask her to send me some more yellow muslin, another bunch of stems, and leaves for the orange blossoms. Do you understand, dear? Go quickly, my child, and I will send Romeo to the baker's for some rolls for our supper, and afterward you will have an hour to practise your scales."

"Yes, mamma," said Seraph resignedly, as she took the basket of flowers and went out.

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IV.

A LITTLE WHARF RAT.

WHEN Monsieur Nardi entered his shop, after his long absence, he was pleased to find everything in order, and as fresh and clean as such an old musty place could possibly be.

The shutters had not been taken down during his holiday, as his business could not well go on without him, his peculiar knowledge being a large part of his stock in trade, and only available when he himself was present. Therefore, for the first time in nearly a hundred years, the little *Magasin des livres* had been closed. Cressy had, however, opened the rear doors and windows and aired it frequently, and had dusted and arranged the books in neat rows, gathered up all the pamphlets and loose leaves, put out of sight all the familiar litter so dear to the old book-lover, until the usually crowded, untidy little place had that swept and garnished appearance which gives us such a feeling of strangeness and newness when we first return home after a long absence.

He had spent some time at the window above, watching the masquerade of the little violiniste, and now it was drawing on toward sunset, and for some reason he had a feeling of loss and loneliness. Was it possible that his few months of travel had spoiled him for his peaceful pursuits, had made him discontented with his humble home and occupation? He could not allow that; no, no, he must pull himself together and shake off the feeling of dejection that had so suddenly taken possession of him.

"Cressy, *ma bonne femme*," he said to his servant, "I shan't take down the shutters to-night; my boxes won't be here before to-morrow morning. I am rather tired, so I will take a stroll on the levee for a breath of fresh air before bed-time. I shall retire early and be up betimes to unpack my boxes."

Then he took his hat and loitered across Jackson Square, where crowds of children were playing in the cool of the evening; their merry, light-hearted laughter cheered him, and he went on toward the levee more hopefully. It was his favorite spot at twilight. Then the labor of the day was over, the great sheds and warehouses

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were closed, the crowds of workmen had gone to their homes, the ships lay dark and silent, their spars and rigging outlined in the shimmering river. In mid-stream the huge steamers puffed up and down, churning the water to white foam, and leaving a long trail of black smoke against the pink and saffron sky.

Holding his hat in his hand, he walked thoughtfully to the very edge of the wharf and stood there for some time, enjoying the freshness and beauty of the scene, while the cool evening air fanned his hot forehead. It was a spot where he had stood nearly every evening for more than forty years and gazed at the same landscape, the same shifting panorama of passing ships and changeful sunset clouds. All were the same, and yet he did not feel in harmony with his surroundings. He did not like this feeling of dissatisfaction; he resented the thought that the pleasures of travel had set him at variance with his former life. Silent, and outwardly calm, his gentle, benevolent face betrayed nothing of the small struggle that was going on within, in his effort to recover his mental equilibrium.

With his eyes fixed on the fading splendors of

the evening sky, he stood softly fanning himself with his hat, when suddenly he started and glanced around uneasily. He had an impression that some one was looking at him, but there was no one visible. Near him was a great mound of baled cotton, piled irregularly and covered with tarpaulins to protect it from the weather. As he looked closely, he saw under a curtain-like flap of the canvas falling over a space between two bales, a pair of large dark eyes peering at him.

For a moment he hesitated, then walked nearer, and stooping looked into the little space, and there saw sitting, like a little statue enshrined in a niche, a thin, ragged boy of about twelve years.

The child looked up, smiling gently as he met the kind eyes bent on him, and said in a pleasant voice, but with the accent of the slums, "Good evenin', sir."

"Good evening, my little friend," returned Monsieur Nardi. "What are you doing here so near dark? Why don't you go home?"

"I haven't got no home," replied the boy, slipping out of his niche and standing before Monsieur Nardi, his ragged hat held respectfully in his hand.

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"No home! I don't understand. Why, where do you live?"

"Oh, anywheres where I happens to be; sometimes one place, sometimes anuder. I most al'ays goes up the river on a lugger an' peddles fruit an' oysters. Then I lives on the lugger an' gits plenty t'eat. When I can't git no chance to take a trip, I stays about the wharves. They call me a li'l wharf rat, but the sailors an' rouserbouts is real good to me. I runs errands fer the screw-men. I does odd jobs fer the men, an' they gives me some o' their dinner, an' sometimes they gives me a nickel."

"You don't mean to tell me," said Monsieur Nardi incredulously, "that you sleep here at night."

"Yes, sir, course I does. When I ain't on a lugger, I sleeps here on the cotton; it's warm, mister. In the winter I crawls in ermong the bales, an' in the summer I sleeps on the soft side of a plank, an' when it rains, I gits un'er the tarpoleyuns, an' I'm as dry as a crust o' bread. But I knows you, mister," he continued, with a little wink, and a grimace of pleased intelligence. "I've knowed you a long time; you're the mister what

sells books on St. Louis Street. I've been there lots o' times."

"Have you? What have you been there for?" asked Monsieur Nardi, greatly interested.

"Oh, that's where I goes to git my books an' papers what I reads an' says my lessons out of. If you'll jes' please to come erlong here, mister, I'll show you where I keeps 'em."

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MARC.

WITH a feeling of amused curiosity Monsieur Nardi followed the little fellow, as he hopped before him, looking back now and then, his little grimy face bright with eager expectation.

"You see, mister, I'm lame; I run a nail in my foot, an' that's why I'm hangin' 'bout here 'stead o' bein' off on a trip. Here's where I keeps my books an' things," and he stooped before a pile of lumber, and lifting up some loose boards, dragged out an old tin biscuit box filled with such a collection of rubbish as boys like to own. On top of the trash were several dilapidated spelling-books, some pages and scraps of magazines, newspapers, and colored posters, with a broken slate on which was an attempt at writing.

"See, mister, I got all these books an' papers out o' the trash box on your sidewalk. I goes there often an' picks it over, but your shop's been shut up a good while. Your old colored woman told me you'd gone away to Paris."

"Yes, I've been away," returned Monsieur Nardi, surprised at the little fellow's information concerning his own movements; "but, my child, why do you gather up these scraps of books. Can you read?"

"Yes, sir; course I can," he replied with a pleased chuckle. "Want to hear me?" and picking up one of the colored posters, he read the headlines correctly in a clear, firm voice.

"Very good, very good," said Monsieur Nardi heartily. "Why, my little fellow, how did you learn to read?"

"Mr. Patsy, the watchman, told me the letters. Mr. Patsy's been here ever since I can remember, an' he's awful good to me; he gives me swell shirts and breeches sometimes. He knows how to read fine print, an' write, an' do sums, cause he checks freight and signs papers. Me an' him is chums, an' he's teachin' me to write an' do sums on my slate. See my writing?" and he held up the broken slate, proudly pointing out each word with his little dirty finger. "That spells my name, an' New 'leens, Louisiana."

"What is your name, my child?" asked Monsieur Nardi, his eyes on the slate, vainly trying to decipher the characters.

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"Marc, sir."

"What else?"

"Nothing else; just Marc."

"Ah," murmured Monsieur Nardi, "one of God's
children;" then aloud, "And your parents, are
they dead?"

"I guess so; I don't know. I've been here ever
since I can remember, an' I never had any mammy
or daddy. Mr. Patsy, he said I was a little kid
runnin' 'round here when he got the job, an' he don't
know who I b'long to. He's tried to find out, but
he can't. I don't need any daddy an' mammy. I
git plenty t'eat, an' I can read, an' I sleep warni
o' nights; only sometimes—sometimes when Mr.
Patsy's off makin' his roun's, I gits awful lunsum,
an' I'm 'fraid o' them water gobble-uns when I
hears 'em splashin' un'er the wharf. A Swede
sailorman tol' me sometimes them gobble-uns come
an' drags boys down in the river an' drowns 'em.
Now does they, mister?"

"No, no, my child," said Monsieur Nardi, look-
ing at the boy reflectively. Something in the wist-
ful, appealing glance that accompanied the question
went straight to the old man's heart. The child
was dirty and unkempt, but he was not ugly. His

slim figure was straight and well formed, his features were regular, and his eyes were beautiful, large, trustful brown eyes, like the honest eyes of a dog. And his intelligence, uncommon in one of his class, his pitiful efforts at learning, his carefully hoarded scraps of books, and his pathetic little history, touched the tender spot, unusually tender to-night, in Monsieur Nardi's kind heart.

He remembered his own unhappy, neglected childhood, his own struggle for knowledge, and he felt like taking the child to the same fountain where he had quaffed such delicious draughts. Instantly his decision was made, and he resolved to give the little waif a chance. "And so you get lonesome sometimes," he said. "Now, how would you like to come and live with me?"

The boy's eyes grew large with surprise. "Live with you? Course, mister, I'd like it, but I guess you ain't in earnest."

"Certainly I am, *mon enfant*; I am looking for a boy to bring up in my shop, to teach him the business. I prefer an orphan. Evidently you are one. You like books; and if you are a good, honest boy, you'll suit me perfectly."

"Ask Mr. Patsy if I'm a good boy; he'll tell

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happy, neglected knowledge, and the same fountain of precious draughts. and he resolved "And so you said. "Now, how with me?"

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I am looking for to teach him the evidently you are are a good, honest boy; he'll tell

you I don't lie an' steal. He knows I'm willin' to work when I ain't got a sore foot. Do you mean, mister, that I can go in your shop with all them books?"

"It will be part of your work to help me to take care of them."

"An' I can look in 'em an' read 'em?"

"As much as you like."

"Oh, jimminy crickets! That's a snap for a kid like me," he cried, throwing up his ragged cap joyfully.

"If you're as nice a boy as I think you are, you shall be well cared for," continued Monsieur Nardi cheerily. "You shall have a comfortable little room back of my shop, good food, and clean clothes; but you must be quiet and studious, and you must give up your wild life on the levee. Do you think you can do that, *mon enfant*?"

"You bet I can, mister; jes' try me an' see. I know that place; I've been there lots o' times an' looked in the shop when you didn't see me. But Mr. Patsy, he's my chum." Here his face fell and he looked worried and perplexed. "He'll think I've give him the shake. You'll let me come sometimes an' see him, won't you?"

"Why, yes; every day if you like, and he can come and see you. I know Patsy; he is a very worthy man. You can keep your friend, my child. I don't want you to be ungrateful; but I am thinking how strange it is that I never before saw you here."

"I've seen you plenty o' times standin' jes' there on the edge o' the wharf, holdin' your hat an' wipin' your face when it was warm. I looked at you good 'cause I knowed you, but you didn't happen to see me."

"Yes, that was it," returned Monsieur Nardi, smiling. "I didn't happen to see you until this evening." Then he thought, "I have felt heart-sick ever since I heard that child play the violin. If there's a wound in the heart, the music of a violin makes it bleed. I am a lonely, disappointed old man; I need something human to love. I never before felt so strongly the need of a child to care for. It may be that *le bon Dieu* has sent me this one. We will see, we will see." Then he said aloud, "Well, my child, will you go with me now? Yes, you had better. Come then; let us go home."

"Can I take my box, and things?" he asked.
Monsieur Nardi said, "Yes," and Marc rooted

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among the boards and drew out a few shabby
toys, which he stuffed in his ragged pockets, and
tucking the tin box under his arm, he started off
with a beaming face.

"Cressy, *ma bonne femme*," said the old bookseller,
going into his neat kitchen, where the old woman
sat darning linen, "I've got a surprise for you.
Since I've been out I have found the boy I have
always been looking for,—that friendless orphan.
He is dirty and hungry. Feed him, and see
that he has a bath and a comfortable bed, and in
the morning, on your way to market, buy him
some clothes; burn those he has on. And, Cressy,
he has injured his foot; put arnica and a clean
bandage on it. Do all you can for him and think
that you are doing it for one of His little ones, and
me as well.—Come in, *mon enfant*. Here he is;
his name is Marc. By and by we will find him
another, and—and we will teach him to wear
shoes and stockings when his foot is well; *n'est
ce pas, ma bonne?*"

VI.

BON-BONS FROM PARIS.

THE next morning Monsieur Nardi awoke with the feeling of a new responsibility resting upon him. He was very tired after his journey and the important transaction of the evening, and when he had taken his coffee he turned over for another nap; therefore it was later than his usual hour, and the bright October sun was looking into his window when he threw open the shutters. While he was shaving he was wondering what had become of his little *protégé*, and whether Cressy had carried out his instructions to make the boy presentable.

Presently he heard from below a merry sweet laugh, and looking into his garden he saw Marc, but so transformed that it was difficult to recognize in him the little *gamin* of the previous evening. He was perched on a bench under the arbor of multiflora rose, with Toto on his shoulder, and the terrier jumping over him as if they were old friends. He looked several shades whiter now that

his face was thoroughly bathed, and Cressy had sent him to the barber around the corner to have his hair washed and trimmed, and the result was that his matted, straggling locks were now soft and waving, and of a pretty chestnut brown. He was clad in a neat dark suit, and his lame foot was bound with a clean bandage. Altogether he looked like a nice boy, neat and comfortable, and so happy. Monsieur Nardi thought the child had the most musical laugh that he had ever heard.

When the old gentleman descended to his little sitting-room, behind his shop, where his breakfast was served, he told Cressy to send the boy to him, and Marc entered briskly, his bright face full of expectation, just touched with anxiety.

"*Bon jour, mon enfant,*" said Monsieur Nardi pleasantly; "I'm glad to see you looking so well. How did you sleep in your new home?"

"Oh, sir, I couldn't sleep in the bed. It was too soft and warm. I never slep' in a first-class bed like that, but I'll git used to it, an' then I'll like it, I guess."

"And your clothes, are they comfortable? Do you like them?"

"Yes, sir," he said, eyeing them a little doubt-

fully. "They're turruble swell. I ain't used to such clean togs; but your colored woman says I'll git use to them too. She says I'll be a boss dude in six months; but I won't, 'cause I hates a dude, an' I don't want the kids a laughin' an' pokin' fun at me."

Monsieur Nardi smiled. "You shall not dress above your position, my child, I promise you that; but you must be neat and properly clothed to work in my shop, and I want you to speak French as well as you can. I like it better than your English. Try to forget the *argot* of the levee, for you must learn to speak properly, in order to serve my customers."

"Yes, sir, I knows that, and I means to try hard to please you; an' I wants to work. Please give me somethin' to do, an' you'll see how I can work."

"Very well, my boy, you shall have something to do in the shop. Ask Cressy, and she will show you what books need dusting and arranging. When I finish my breakfast, you shall help me to open my boxes."

Monsieur Nardi had no idea that he had made such extensive purchases in Paris until he saw the packages piled up in his little shop. He

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eyed them doubtfully, scarcely knowing where he could put so many additional volumes on his already overcrowded shelves; but he went to work with a will, assisted by Marc, who had the delightful faculty of doing exactly as he was told.

On consulting his note-book, the old gentleman found that box four contained toys, knick-knacks, and little odd things that he had picked up in the Palais Royal and Bon Marché, for his small friends. These he hastened to unpack, and he was surprised to find that his little assistant was uncommonly helpful, and practical beyond his years. Although at times Marc was sadly distracted by the beauty and variety of the articles he was handling, he worked seriously, and with the closest attention to Monsieur Nardi's directions, trotting back and forth from the boxes to the tables and shelves, placing each thing just where it belonged, with such good taste and aptitude that the old bookseller was charmed with the boy's intelligence and docility.

Before Monsieur Nardi was aware of it, so busy had he been, it was long after midday, and his little friends, released from the neighboring school, began to gather about him, eagerly expectant.

"Ah! Here you are, *mes enfants*," he said cheerfully, wiping the dust from his hands and straightening his bent back. "*Eh bien*, I tried to remember you all. Now, my little girls first; girls must always have the first place." He was very systematic, and on each little gift he had written a name.

"Lucie, *ma très bien aimée*, here is a doll for you. Look, *ma chère*, you can touch this tiny spring, and she will walk and hold her parasol over her head like a real little lady. *Elle est chic, n'est-ce pas?*"

"*Merci, merci bien, Oncle 'Nidas*," and little Lucie grasped the lovely toy rapturously; "*Oh, oh*, she is so pretty!"

"And Ffine, *ma bonne petite* Ffine, this is a Cupidon for you, a love of a Cupidon; and, Marie, for you, a trifle, but it is not so bad. *Eh bien*, Céleste, for you a useful present, a neat little writing-case for my best scholar, — pens, paper, and all. *Bien, bien, très bien*." And Monsieur Nardi pushed them off with both hands: their clamor of thanks and lively demonstrations of gratitude were too much for him. "Be quiet, *allons, allons*. Here, Henri, this is for you. And, Pierre, you see I have not forgotten you. *Voilà*, Jacques, my poor little

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Jacques, in this box is a strap for your lame hip. You must wear it all the time, and it will cure you, and under the strap—well, take it home and look, and you will see, my little man, you will see. Ah, *gros Jean*, you are getting too large for *joujous*. Take this—*pas beaucoup*, but it shows that I remembered you. Now you all have something, *n'est-ce pas ?*"

"*Oh oui, oui, bon. Oncle 'Nidas ; merci, merci !*" and there was another onslaught, from which, laughing and struggling, he defended himself as well as he was able.

During all this animated little scene, Marc had stood with clasped hands and eager, dancing eyes, a delighted spectator of the happiness of others.

"He has a good, generous heart," thought Monsieur Nardi; "he has not shown the least jealousy or disappointment because I have nothing for him. Come here, *mon enfant*," he said kindly, "and let these little people see you. Children, your Uncle 'Nidas has a new nephew; his name is Marc, and he has come to live here. I hope you will all be very friendly to him."

"We will, Uncle 'Nidas, we will," they all cried heartily, and with one voice.

Then little Fifine drew near and whispered. "Listen, *mon oncle* ; did you bring him from Paris in one of those big boxes ?"

"No, naughty little one ; no, no," replied Monsieur Nardi, laughing and patting the rosy cheek ; "no, I did not bring him from Paris, I found him here. Ah, ah, what do I see ? another *cher petit ange*."

For just at that moment Monsieur Nardi noticed a little figure standing without, on the extreme edge of the sidewalk, looking sadly at the happy group within the shop. There was a wistful expression in the brown eyes that went straight to the heart of the good old man, a sort of lonely aloofness from the happiness of the other children, which appealed strongly to him. Stepping to the door, he said kindly, "Won't you come in and look at the pretty things ? You see I know you ; you are my little neighbor." Then to himself, "Dear me, dear me, and I have nothing for her."

Glancing around, his eyes fell on a box of bonbons, an exquisite thing of pale mauve satin, ornamented with a bunch of violets and a rich ribbon. He had bought it for an older child ; in

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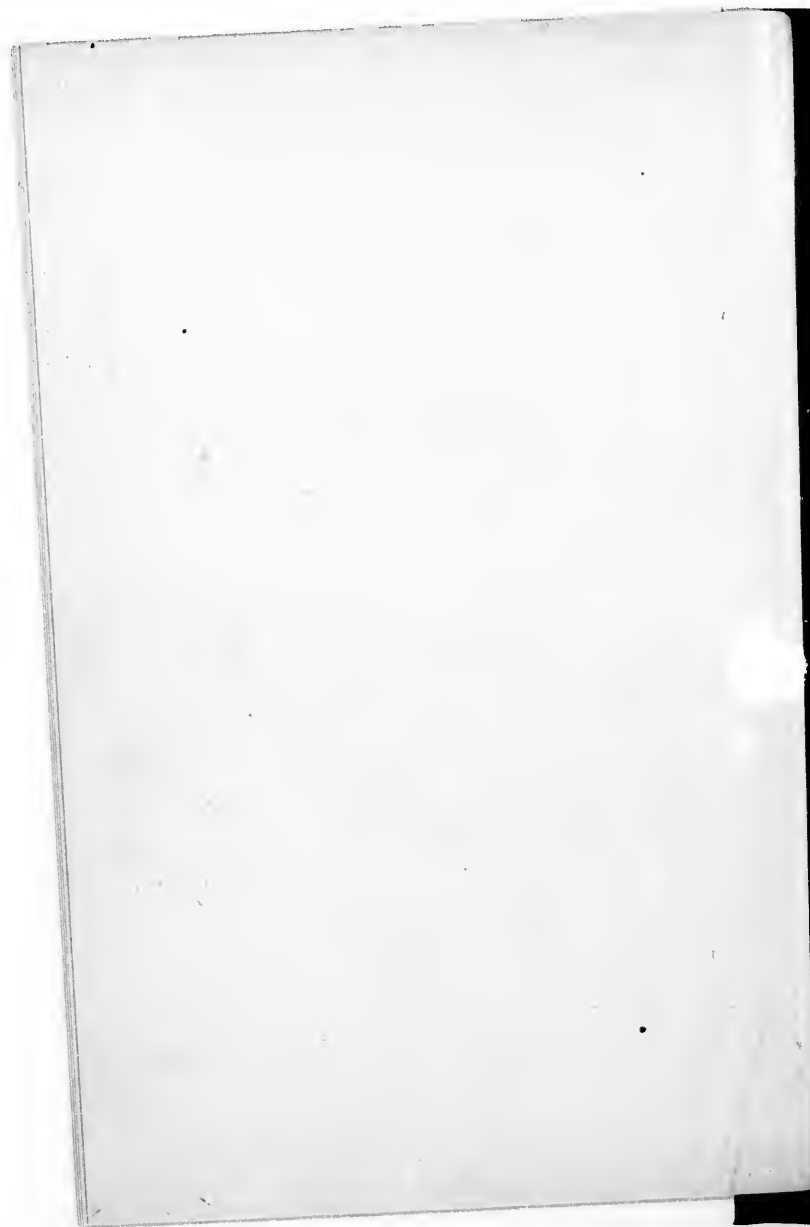
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"I WOULD YOU COME IN AND LOOK AT THE PRETTY THINGS?"



fact, he intended it for his friend and customer, Madame St. Maxent. But he did not hesitate, he could not be indifferent to a sad-eyed child; so he wrote on a card, "For the charming little *violiniste*," and fastening it to the ribbon, he handed it to Seraph, saying, "For you, my child; please accept it; it is only a little box of bonbons from Paris."

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VII.

THEIR LITTLE HISTORY.

SERAPH was not fond of Cousin Franz Arnet, although he was almost the only friend she and her mother had. He was a cousin of Carl Blumenthal, the violinist, and when they were boys in far-away Germany, they were intimate friends and close companions. Carl's father was a musical director in Berlin, and the father of Franz was a poor Lutheran minister.

Carl followed the profession of his father. He, Carl, was a musical enthusiast, with more than ordinary talent; but lacking that spark of genius, that immortal touch, which the human soul recognizes and adores. He was a fair-haired, light hearted boy of twenty when he left the fatherland to seek his fortune in the New World. Hearing that New Orleans was a musical city, he drifted South, and very soon got a good engagement as second violin.

For several years he led a careless, happy life, with very little ambition beyond filling his en-

gagement during the season, and at other times eking out his scanty income by teaching and playing.

One winter it was whispered that there was to be a *débutante* in the musical world, a young girl of rare loveliness, who had never appeared before the public, and who had been taught entirely by her mother, Madame Paulette, a former first soprano, who in her youth had been much admired for her beauty, as well as for her noble, upright character.

Madame Paulette had retired early from her profession to devote herself to an invalid husband and one idolized child. Before her little Louise had completed her sixth year, she began to show her inherited talent,—she could sing like a tiny bird,—but her mother, knowing from her own experience, how severe the training must be, and how great were the trials and temptations of a public singer, tried in every way to discourage her little daughter from following the profession which she had found most unsatisfactory.

The child had a thoroughly artistic temperament; she was light and graceful to her dainty finger tips. She loved flowers passionately, and

showed such remarkable taste in fashioning them that her mother apprenticed her to an artificial flower-maker. But, poor child, she could not sit still and patiently follow the dull routine of her trade. She grew tired of cutting leaves and winding stems; her little restless spirit sang to melodies unheard by all save herself. She was like an imprisoned bird or butterfly, her life was rhythm and melody, and she was dying amidst discords, dulness, and inaction. She grew pale and listless; she was fading like a flower in an unnatural atmosphere. At last she declared to her mother, with a passionate outburst of tears, that she could not live, that she must sing or die.

Poor Madame Paulette saw that it was useless to struggle against a law stronger than maternal desires. So she removed Louise from the shop of the flower-maker, and began systematically to train her voice. If she was to be a singer, she should be no ordinary singer. She should be a *première* or nothing. Therefore the delicate, sweet little voice was subjected to the severest training. There must be no note too difficult for her to accomplish. Ah, what an undertaking for a frail little girl of twelve years! What courage, what

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patience, what endurance were necessary before she could hope for success; but at last, when she was scarcely seventeen, one never to be forgotten night, slender girlish Louise appeared before her first audience. The first soprano had been taken suddenly ill, and Louise Paulette was selected to fill the difficult rôle.

Carl Blumenthal, below in the orchestra, almost forgot his notes, so enraptured was he with the lovely creature. Her voice was so pure and fresh, and she was so modest, and so gentle in her *naïve* and childlike efforts to please, that her audience was enchanted with her, and after the first note her success was assured. But, alas, her triumph was short-lived; before the season was over, a sudden cold during too severe practice over a difficult part brought on inflammation of the vocal organs, and her singing days were over. The doctor who attended her gave her little hope from the first. The delicate organization had been overtasked, and Nature had revenged herself.

It was very pathetic, the sudden ending of such a brilliant career, and poor Louise almost sank beneath the blow. Among the first to offer his devotion to the stricken little singer was Carl

Blumenthal. From the first moment of her affliction he cheered her with his sunny, hopeful nature, and sustained her by his loyalty and sincere affection.

Madame Paulette never recovered from the shock; in less than a year after her daughter's misfortune she was released from the anxieties and disappointments of a wearisome life. Then the noble nature of Carl Blumenthal, his love and devotion for the unhappy girl, asserted itself. He married her and took her to a neat cottage, which he furnished and decorated from his small savings, making it as dainty and pretty as he possibly could for his delicate little wife, and they were very happy in their modest home.

The old negro, Romeo, who had been for years a hanger-on, had, without any particular desire on the part of Carl Blumenthal, attached himself to the young violinist with one of those unselfish and sincere affections which often exist between the colored servant and the white master. So when the young couple set up their home, the old darkey became a very useful member of the small ménage, quitting his favorite and life-long haunts, for the kitchen and garden of his adored master.

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Not long after Carl's marriage his family was increased by the arrival, from Germany, of his Cousin Franz. His boyhood's friend had gone into the church, and had been ordained, and called to a small Lutheran congregation in New Orleans, where he had arrived full of piety and zeal to take charge of his new church.

Then another stranger came, a beautiful dark-eyed, golden-haired little girl, so lovely and so lively, so full of life and motion, such a noisy, irrepressible little mite, that the quiet cottage was filled with sudden animation. One day when they were searching for a name to bestow upon the turbulent little creature, her father said, "Let us call her Seraphin," and from that time the name, shortened to Seraph, became a part of her. And it suited her extremely well; she was so bright, so active, so overflowing with sound, so much in evidence, as to be always the most important personage in the small household.

The young mother, notwithstanding her bitter disappointment, could have been happy and contented with her lot had she regained her health after the birth of her child; but, alas, it very soon became apparent that she was to remain an in-

valid, chained to her chair by a partial paralysis of her lower limbs. This was another terrible blow, but Carl and Cousin Franz were so hopeful of her final cure, that at last she accepted the situation patiently, and with much courage endeavored to forget her affliction in her devotion to her husband and child.

Before Seraph was out of long frocks, Cousin Franz, in his austere piety, thought that she was too much petted and pampered; that such unbounded love for an earthly object was little short of idolatry, and before she could speak plainly she had learned to feel the frown of displeasure with which the young minister regarded her. She adored her father and mother; she was all affection, all expansiveness to them, but to cousin Franz she showed a strong dislike, a settled aversion which was remarkable in so young a child. From her earliest recollection he was the bitter drop in her cup—the stern shadow which made her feel that babyhood was not all sunshine.

She was seven years old when her little heart ached with its first real sorrow. Her merry, light-hearted father, full of life and love, left them with a smile on his lips, and an hour after was brought

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THEIR LITTLE HISTORY.

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back white and silent. He lived only a few moments, dumb, unconscious, and was spared "the sadness of farewells." The bright life went out like a candle in a sudden draught.

Often poor little Louise Blumenthal said to Cousin Franz, "It seems as though Carl has gone away only for a little while, and that he must come back again. How can Seraph live all her life without him?"

VIII.

COUSIN FRANZ.

COUSIN FRANZ was a sensible, practical man, with very little romance or sentiment in his composition. He was sincere, devout, and self-sacrificing. One of those orderly, well-balanced souls, extremely well equipped to be a guide and leader for the timid and weak. Therefore when poor Louise Blumenthal found herself so suddenly deprived of all earthly aid, she naturally turned to Cousin Franz for advice and moral support.

At his death, Carl left very little means of sustenance for his wife and child. He was generous and careless of money, and had never refused his small family any luxury that added to its comfort and happiness; therefore he had saved but little, and when he, the cheerful, patient breadwinner, was gone, not sorrow alone, but poverty as well, stared Louise in the face. How could she, a frail cripple, support herself and child?

In this extremity Cousin Franz came bravely forward and adjusted her temporal affairs in a

simple, sensible way. He found for her a smaller, less expensive cottage, he helped her dispose of her superfluous furniture. He wrote to Carl's father a touching letter, to which the musical director generously responded by making his son's widow a small allowance from his own slender income. Then Cousin Franz suggested that it would amuse Louise, as well as add to her little revenue, to take up the long-neglected flower-making, for which she had such a dainty taste, and it was Cousin Franz himself who, in his stiff clerical garb, with his pale, severe face, went to the good-natured, worldly Madame Croizet and asked her to employ the little widow.

"I never send my work out," said Madame. "I have it done under my own eye by young girls who are learning the trade, therefore I pay but little; but I remember *la gentille petite Louise*, and what an exceptional taste she had. So to oblige you, monsieur, I will give her some of my choicest work."

And Croizet was as good as her word. She gave Madame Blumenthal the most difficult orders she received, and the most artistic creations that went from her establishment were the work of

poor Louise's thin little fingers. But she was not paid in proportion to her labor or her talent; still, what she earned helped to eke out her small income and enable her to exist.

After Cousin Franz had so cleverly settled the future of the mother, he laid out a plan for the education of the child. Seraph had an uncommon talent for music. Louise was an excellent pianiste, She had studied the piano while she was learning to sing, for her mother had said that she could never be a *première* unless she understood the *technique* of music. Therefore her hands had labored as well as her voice to become flexible, and easily subservient to her will, and her head had ached over scales, chords, and fugues, but the result was great excellence in *technique*, a thorough knowledge of rudiments, and a superior style of fingering. All this, Cousin Franz decided, must be imparted to Seraph, in order that she might become a teacher of the piano when she was of a suitable age.

"My dear Louise," he said in his serious, authoritative tone,—for he always spoke as though he were preaching,—“it is the only future for Seraph,—lucrative and thoroughly respectable. She

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must practise at least three hours a day now, and from four to six when she is older, and you must be very careful that she does not contract bad habits; she will need no other teacher than yourself until she is twelve or thereabouts. Then we must find some way to finish her. She must be launched by a celebrated professional, and the success of her future is assured."

Cousin Franz had always known that Seraph had a turbulent nature, that she was impetuous, ardent, and passionate; but he believed that children, like horses, should be broken, that they could be curbed, check-reined, trained to harness, and even punished severely if they were refractory, and that by proper discipline the most stubborn little soul could be brought to a state of docility and submission. But he had overestimated the value of his theory. Severity had no effect upon Seraph. Poor little Louise! her gentle heart, aching and trembling, had tried coercion, and even mild forms of punishment. More she could not do—one might as well expect a dove to fret and peck its young, as for that frail and tender little mother to constantly thwart and restrain the child she adored.

The only law that Seraph recognized was the law of love. For love of her mother she tried to study the piano, she tried heroically to practise the allotted time, but very seldom did she succeed in performing her distasteful duty. Her little soul was in the violin, and had she been allowed, she would have practised on that for hours, joyfully and unweariedly. Nor could she understand why one instrument was more desirable than another. It was the music, the melody, the harmony, the uplifting and outpouring, the impassioned utterance, that carried her out of herself, and made her long for the intimate understanding which every true artist must have with his instrument.

Although Seraph loved her mother dearly, she felt at times that there was some injustice and not a little cruelty in depriving her of an innocent pleasure, as well as preventing her from becoming an adept in a study which she had fixed upon in the very depths of her heart as her future vocation. However, with uncommon intelligence, she understood something of the struggle her mother was enduring, and secretly blamed Cousin Franz as the cause of all her trouble, all the discords and disagreements of her life. But for him and

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his long sermons she knew that there would be perfect harmony between her and her *chère petite maman*, that she would be left in peace to practise on her violin, and dream undisturbed her bright dreams of future success.

She was not a selfish, ungenerous child; she thought first of her mother, her gentle uncomplaining little mother, bound always to her chair, bending her tired, childlike head over her colored muslins and silks, fashioning them with infinite care and patience into such exquisite imitations of nature that one could almost feel their perfume. Sometimes Seraph would snatch the stained fingers to her lips and kiss them passionately. Then the mother would lean her head against the child, and they would cry together.

There was a stunted Lamarque rose running up on the shaded end of the little gallery. And Madame Blumenthal often watched its restrained growth. Sometimes a feeble yellow shoot would struggle forth and turn directly to a ray of sunlight that touched for an hour or so her small window. Then how it would grow and grow; the sickly yellow would change to living green; tufts of leaves would start out as if by magic. It

seemed to throb with joyful surprise, as it strained up and up toward heaven by the pathway of the sun.

In the springing ardent growth of the rose she understood something of Seraph's longings and ambitions. "Ah," she would say, with suppressed impatience, "why, why, must I force the child to grow another way? Why cannot I let her reach up to the sun untrammelled and free?"

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IX.

A GERMAN INTERIOR.

COUSIN FRANZ was very comfortably settled as to his mundane affairs. A year before the death of Carl Blumenthal he had married a widow with one little girl, and beside her child the young widow had other substantial possessions, — a plain but commodious house, surrounded by a large garden, together with a snug little fortune, well invested in good securities. She was a member of Cousin Franz's congregation and very active in good works, a practical, commonplace, and rather narrow person, devoted to her household, her child, and her church. If she and her house — which was not far from Cousin Franz's place of worship — had been especially created and built for him, they could not have suited him better.

It was true that she was several years older than the young minister, and not at all pretty. She had a broad, colorless German face, stolid and mild; light eyes, very far apart, which gave her an air of surprise and incredulity; and a comfort-

able breadth of figure made her appear older even than she was.

Her little daughter Madge, a nice, prim child, looked extremely like a small Dutch picture. She had the broad face and large, light eyes of her mother; her forehead was very high, and her soft, fawn-colored hair was combed severely back, and hung in a thick sleek braid below her waist. Her plain, dark frocks were finished with a white frill at the neck, and the long sleeves came down to her little thumbs. She was very gentle and docile,—a perfectly plastic lump of clay in the hands of that clever potter, Cousin Franz, who was moulding and forming her into a vessel of wonderful perfection.

If she ever suffered from the process, her calm, patient little face did not show it. She seemed contented and passively happy. She was very industrious in school and out of it. The duty of each hour was laid down with the rigidity of the laws of the Medes and Persians. Her recreation consisted of a prim walk with Cousin Franz, when she must not look to the right nor left, but advance in a straight line, with toes at the right angle and head stiffly erect.

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In regard to deportment, Cousin Franz was a severe disciplinarian, a thorough martinet, and there must be no deviation from the narrow lines laid down for the instruction of his little step-daughter. When this walk, which was more like a dress parade, was over, she was allowed a half-hour in the ugly garden, where she must not hop or run, pluck a flower, soil her frock, or step on the stiff borders. Then there was so much time at the piano, so much time at her German, and so much time at her darning; and after that the Bible lesson, the evening prayers, and then to bed.

Madge had given each of her parents a cold kiss, and was on her way to her room, unbuttoning her frock, with much struggling and shrugging as she went; the time allotted to her for the duties of her toilet was very short, and her little fawn-colored head must be on its pillow at the stroke of eight.

Cousin Franz and his wife sat together in the study. There were a number of well-filled bookshelves, a large useful desk, where Cousin Franz prepared his sermons, a roomy table, on it a few plain books, and a reading-lamp covered with a

green shade. Around the table were some stiff leather-covered chairs; and against the wall a high-backed leather-covered sofa repelled all advances toward intimacy. It was very evident that the occupants of the room were orderly souls, so precise and stiff were their surroundings. There were no pictures, no ornaments, no little trifles, which give a familiar and homelike air to even the humblest place. Everything was cold, colorless, and formal, yet withal simple and peaceful.

Madame Arnet, in a severe black gown, stitched industriously at her needlework, while Cousin Franz slowly turned the leaves of a very old book, quite absorbed in its yellow pages. At length he looked up and said, in a voice of extreme satisfaction, "Yes, yes, this is a bargain, Rachel. I have not the least doubt that this is a genuine Robert Etienne. Here is the date, Paris, 1515, perfectly legible, and I have learned that there were a number of this edition of Justin Martyr printed. I have no doubt but that it is an antique."

"It's old and dirty enough to be one," returned Madame Arnet indifferently. "To me it seems worth very little."

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"Ah, I daresay it does seem worthless to you. My poor Rachel, I don't expect *you* to appreciate it," said Cousin Franz, with gentle sarcasm. "You are not a lover of books, especially of old books; but Monsieur Nardi, whom I consider an authority, thinks it one of the gems of the collection that he made in Paris. However, there are others which I should prefer did my means allow me to become their owner. An undoubted Aldine, 1595, and a Virgil of the Barbou Collection, almost worth their weight in gold to collectors. But I can't expect to own such treasures. I should be, and I am, thankful for this."

From these remarks we can learn that Cousin Franz had *one* weakness, and that was a love for old books, which was not shared by his highly practical wife. She did not understand why he should be enthusiastic over such a musty old volume; so she made no response to his self-congratulations, and her face was a perfect blank as she stitched away industriously.

Presently, she broke the silence by saying irrelevantly, "Dear me, Mr. Arnet, I'm really worried about that Stengel girl. I think her voice is going since she had influenza, and if she can't

sing, what will we do? There isn't another girl in our church who can take her place."

Cousin Franz made no reply. He was examining, with a magnifying-glass, an ornamented initial letter, and Madame Arnet meandered on. "There's another thing, Mr. Arnet, that I'd like to speak about. I think Miss Knoop wears her hair frizzed too much over her forehead. I don't think it's quite respectable for an organist in our church. Couldn't you speak to her? I mean, couldn't you give her a hint to comb it back. And the *ténor* whispers and laughs too much with the *alto*. It's really shocking. I don't think our choir comes up to the expectations of the congregation. As you are so particular with children, I should think you'd discipline those who ought to know better. Since the Metzses have taken two front pews, new people have come in. It looks well to see a carriage and coachman in livery drive up to a church, and I think we ought to have a new cover for the desk, as you are bringing in fashionable people."

Still not a word from Cousin Franz. He was too busy with his magnifying-glass, and patient Madame Arnet subsided into silence, only broken

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At length Cousin Franz closed the new possession with a reluctant sigh, and pushing it aside, said in rather a vexed tone, "I don't know what is to be done with that child."

"Who? What child? You don't mean Madge?" cried Madame Arnet, startled out of her composure.

"No, no indeed; if it were Madge, I should know what to do. It's Seraph again."

"Oh! it's Seraph again," echoed Madame Arnet comfortably, quite as though it were a matter of course.

"To-day, after I left Monsieur Nardi's shop, I called on Cousin Louise, and I found her very much discouraged about Seraph. The child is stubborn and disobedient. She can't get her to practise her piano lessons."

"I'm not surprised; your Cousin Louise has indulged Seraph until she has lost control over her. I began with Madge —"

"My dear Rachel, please don't deceive yourself; when I took Madge in hand, I found her deportment — her training, very — very defective. Seraph

has never had the benefit of my discipline; therefore what can we expect of a turbulent, self-willed child left to a frail, injudicious mother."

"No, we can't expect her to be like Madge," said Madame Arnet meekly; "she hasn't had Madge's advantages."

"Louise said she wished Seraph could be more with Madge. She thought Madge's example might benefit her."

"Oh no! oh my, no! I want Madge to see very little of Seraph. Such a light, trifling child, crazy over a violin. Not a decent instrument for a girl. They tell me she has old Romeo for an audience and plays on her violin, dressed in her mother's old finery. Madge knows nothing of such folly, and I don't intend she shall."

"Seraph must be saved from herself," continued Cousin Franz severely. "She must be properly educated, she must be forced to study. I told Louise that the time had come for decided action, and the weak, indulgent creature only cried and said she could not be harsh with Seraph. There is only one thing to be done: that violin must be taken from her."

"Yes, it must be taken from her," repeated Madame Arnet.

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"If she has no violin, she can't waste her time, and then, besides, Louise ought not to keep that violin. It is a very valuable instrument, a del Gesu of Guarnerius. Carl considered it worth a great deal. They need the money, and it is clearly my duty to sell it, if I can find a customer."

"Then why not do it at once and end the trouble?" said Madame Arnet placidly.

"I mentioned it to-day to Louise, and she was decidedly against it. She said it would be cruel to the child, and all such absurd nonsense."

"You are Seraph's guardian; don't consult Louise. Take the violin quietly without her knowing it, and when you have sold it, there is an end of Seraph's folly. She will get over her childish sentiment for the violin, and will take to the piano."

"I agree with you, Rachel. I think you have put it very clearly. It is a disagreeable duty, but I owe it to Carl as well as to the child. Her future career depends on her present training. Yes, that violin must be taken from her, and I must find some means of disposing of it. However, I will consider the matter very fully before I act, but act I must."

X.

FRIENDS ALL.

FROM the moment when Monsieur Nardi gave Seraph the box of bon-bons from Paris, the child's heart went out to the gentle old man with strong affection, and he in turn felt the deepest interest in his beautiful, talented little neighbor. Suddenly, without expectation or preparation, two singularly attractive children had come into his life. He had always had his small favorites, he had been *Oncle 'Nidas* to half the children in the neighborhood in a desultory sort of way, but none of them had taken a strong hold on his heart, as these two had.

His little *protégé* Marc, after several weeks' trial, had not disappointed him. He was obedient, industrious, and useful, and often he found himself wondering how he had managed to get along without such a boy. Already he was quite a companion as well as an assistant, and so intelligent and trustworthy that Monsieur Nardi allowed

him to wait on his customers. If the boy ever neglected a duty, it was when he was so entirely absorbed in an interesting book as to become oblivious to time and place. There was something a little abnormal in his craving—his hunger, one might call it—for books, especially for books of history and biography. Curled up in some quiet corner, with a book before him, he was often forgetful of time and the requirements of his position.

Monsieur Nardi was very indulgent and gentle. Sometimes when he really needed him he would not disturb him.

"I was so once myself," he would say, remembering the hunger, the unsatisfied hunger, of his own childhood. "Let him get his fill, let him read until he is tired. My own experience would be worth nothing if it did not teach me tolerance. At heart the boy is good and honest, and I mean to make a man of him."

But Cressy was less patient than her master. Often the boy would forget his meals; then the old woman would "wake him," as she called it, with no gentle shake, and bid him to move around lively and earn his keep.

"Why aren't you helping the master? If you've nothing to do in the shop, there's plenty in the garden to keep you busy. The flower beds need weeding, and the walks are full of grass. You can dig the grass from between the bricks better than I can; your back's younger than mine. I'd even rather see you out here playing with Monkey and Toto than everlastingly with a book. For my part, I don't see much in books to make people deaf, dumb, and lazy. My boy, if you want to get on, you've got to work more and read less."

Marc would laugh and flush guiltily, promising the old tyrant to mend his ways; but at the first opportunity he would again have his nose in the objectionable book.

When Monsieur Nardi overheard Cressy rating his *protégé*, he did not reprove her, but, one morning, he said with careful diplomacy:

"Cressy, *ma bonne femme*, I think that now our family has increased, you need some help about the yard and garden. Can't you engage that old servant next door to assist you? He seems a good, honest creature. Let him keep the court in order, and do odd jobs. I should like him to sweep the shop and sidewalk. He can

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be very useful. I know his mistress has not
sufficient work to keep him busy, and she will be
very glad to have him earn something outside.
And, Cressy, don't be quite so economical in your
marketing. Remember, *ma bonne*, that we have
another to feed, a growing boy; and then this old
man, if he does extra work, he will need extra
food. Give him plenty of good strong soup, and a
chop, now and then, to take home and cook for
his supper. And couldn't you occasionally spare
a chicken out of your coop? Anything that is
left over will be useful to him, and I shall be
glad if you will help him. The old and feeble
need plenty of nourishing food. And while I
think of it, Cressy, buy more fruit at market.
Children like fruit, and old children like it too;
n'est ce pas, ma femme? Still another thing.
After this you can put two plates at my table.
I have decided to have Marc take his meals with
me. He is very neat about his person, and now
I want to teach him to eat, as well as to speak,
properly. Do you understand?"

This a little severely, seeing Cressy's frown,
and hearing her mutter, "A little street *gamin*,
Monsieur Leonidas, at the table with you?"

"Yes, Cressy, at the table with me. I mean to adopt the boy, and he must be taught to eat properly. Do as I wish, and we will continue to be good friends."

Cressy said no more, but heroically prepared to do her master's bidding. It was hard; it was an awful blow to all her prejudices, but it was her master's order, and Monsieur Leonidas Nardi must be obeyed, especially when he spoke in that tone.

To the first part of his instructions she readily agreed; for she was very kindly disposed toward poor old Romeo, who knew a sure way to the heart of his dusky neighbor. A little judicious flattery had warmed and softened the aged tyrant, and already a great many choice compliments, as well as a number of dainty morsels, had crossed the fence between the two yards.

Romeo never partook of Cressy's generous donations, although often his mouth watered for them. Every scrap was carefully carried to Louise's little pantry and served to his young mistress and her child, with many small deceptions and prevarications, which we sincerely hope were not set down to the poor old negro's account.

Food was scarce in the little household. A great

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calamity had fallen upon them. The musical director in Berlin had, on account of old age and illness, lost his position, and therefore Madame Blumenthal's small allowance was stopped, which meant the most pinching poverty for the mother and child. The little wage Louise earned by her work barely paid her rent, and for the first time, want, like a gaunt spectre, stood before her and looked her gloomily in the face.

Cressy had learned of this new misfortune from Romeo, and Monsieur Nardi had learned of it from Cressy; hence his sudden interest in Romeo's *cuisine*.

Any morning early some such conversation might be heard across the fence:

"Miss Cressy, is you dar? How's yer healf dis fine mawnin'?"

"*Bien, très bien*, Romeo."

"Well, you is suttently a smart lady to be in from market so soon. Fur a fac', yer does make marketin' early. My Miss Louise she doan' sen' me 'twill arter breakfus, 'cause she gits up mighty late, she does."

"Poor Madame, she is ill; and then she hasn't any call to get up early, as I have. But won't you

take a cup of early coffee, Romeo? I dripped plenty. Have *café au lait* or *café noir*?"

"Well, I'll take a drop o' bofe if yer doan' mine, Miss Cressy. Yer does make sich good coffee; more excellenter I never tasted. I's ben a good cook in my day, an' I know what good coffee is."

"*Eh bien*, Romeo, and have a *miche* with it, and a saucer of cream cheese. No one but the boy eats cream cheese, and there's too much for him; and I know you'll like a little pat of butter with your *miche*."

"Thank yer, thank yer, Miss Cressy; you's sure got a large heart an' a gen'rous han'. Bress der Lor' for sich a lady as yer is."

"That's nothing, Romeo; I like to give to them that deserves it. After you get your work done, come around. You'll find the gate locked; but ring, and I'll let you in. I've got a little job for you, and there'll be something for your dinner."

"Oh, Miss Cressy, what a fine, han'sum lady you is! I'm in luck ter have sich a frien' in my ole age."

"And, Romeo, I'll pay you the four bits I owe you for cleaning the windows."

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"No, no, yer doan' owe me nofin', Miss Cressy.
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"Oh, you must take the money. Monsieur
 Leonidas won't like it if you don't. He's very
 particular about paying people who work for
 him."

"Well, well, I'll be 'roun' by an' by. You
 suttently is a fine lady."

Then Cressy would go back to her kitchen with
 a grim smile on her severe face; and Romeo
 would slip into the little pantry to prepare his
 mistress's breakfast.

A little later perhaps another small comedy
 would be played in the front of the two houses.
 Seraph, looking like a morning rose, the mists of
 sleep still in her drowsy eyes, would come out to
 the little front garden to gather a few flowers for
 her mother's breakfast table, a pretty little atten-
 tion which she never neglected, and Monsieur
 Nardi was sure to be sitting in the shop door,
 reading his morning paper.

He would not appear to see Seraph just at first,
 but would keep on reading as intently as though
 there were some new sensation in the closely

scanned columns. After a while he would look up and smile and bow with old-fashioned formality. Then Seraph's eyes would sparkle, all the sleep gone out of them in an instant, and she would hasten to open the gate. Skipping along the walk and holding out her posy, "Are not they pretty?" she would call. "They're for *petite man*, but you shall smell them."

When she reached Monsieur Nardi's side, her hand was held out eagerly to be clasped in his cordial grasp, and he would say with kind ceremony, "*Bon jour, Mademoiselle*; a pleasant morning, is it not? and Madame, your mother, is she well?"

To which Seraph would reply with her piquant accent, "*Bon jour, Oncle 'Nidas*. Mamma is always the same."

After these little compliments were exchanged, Monsieur Nardi would smell her flowers and discuss the beauty of each. Then he would ask her in for a moment, just to say *bon jour* to Marc, who would be busy dusting and arranging the books, looking sedately happy the while. The breakfast table would be laid in the sitting-room, and there was sure to be a large dish of fruit.

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Monsieur Nardi would select the choicest, arrange some grape leaves on a pretty plate, which he would fill and hand to Seraph, saying with a cheery smile, "For the breakfast of *Madame et Mademoiselle.*"

"*Merci, merci bien, Oncle 'Nidas,*" and Seraph, her little face full of morning sunshine, would hasten to her mother with her flowers and fruit.

XI.

AN APPRECIATIVE AUDIENCE.

SERAPH had made an agreement with her mother which she was resolutely trying to keep. She had promised to practise the piano faithfully three hours each day, and to give up her masquerading on the little platform if her mother would allow her to play the violin three times a week in Monsieur Nardi's sitting-room directly after his dinner.

To this Madame Blumenthal consented. It was a great pleasure for Seraph as well as for her appreciative little audience, which consisted of Monsieur Nardi, Marc, and some of the neighbors' children, while Cressy stood in the door in a state of enchantment, her eyes closed and her dignified old head wagging back and forth in time with the bewitching strains.

On these occasions Seraph was radiant. Monsieur Nardi had made for her a raised platform of a large, flat box covered with a rug, and placed

beside it a small table, on which always stood a bunch of fresh flowers. She was very sensitive to her environment, and this arrangement gave importance to the occasion, and acted as a stimulant on her artistic and impressionable nature. The only flaw in the perfection of the whole was that she could not appear in her usual toilet; however, she wore her best white frock and faded sash, which were rather shabby, but still helped to give an air of festivity to the scene.

Sometimes the child played so well, with so much passion and power, that Monsieur Nardi regretted that there was not a larger audience to hear her. Although he enjoyed her playing keenly, it nevertheless had the effect of saddening him, and in spite of his efforts to forget, it brought back vividly the memory of the disappointment of his life.

The dear old gentleman had had his romance, long ago, when his young head was covered with soft curling hair and his eyes were brown and bright. He was so young, so poor, so obscure, when his heart was first touched, and the object of his adoration was so far above him, so worshipped and flattered by the rich and powerful, that he

scarcely dared to raise his reverent eyes toward her. How beautiful she was, with her flower-like face, her beaming eyes, her adorable smile! To the poor bookworm, shut up within the narrow bounds of the dark, musty shop, she seemed like a beautiful vision. Even now a strain of music, the pink petals of a rose, the perfume of jasmine, had the power to carry him back to those foolish old days; to soften his heart like melted wax, to fill his eyes with hot tears, to make him again a disappointed heart-sick boy.

And Seraph's eyes and smile were like hers. Yes, she had the same sweet brown eyes, the same innocent, half-mirthful, half-saddened smile. Therefore it was no wonder that the child had won her way into his innermost heart, and that he was always thinking and planning how to give her some pleasure, or some real assistance without seeming obtrusive or wounding the delicate sensibilities of the mother.

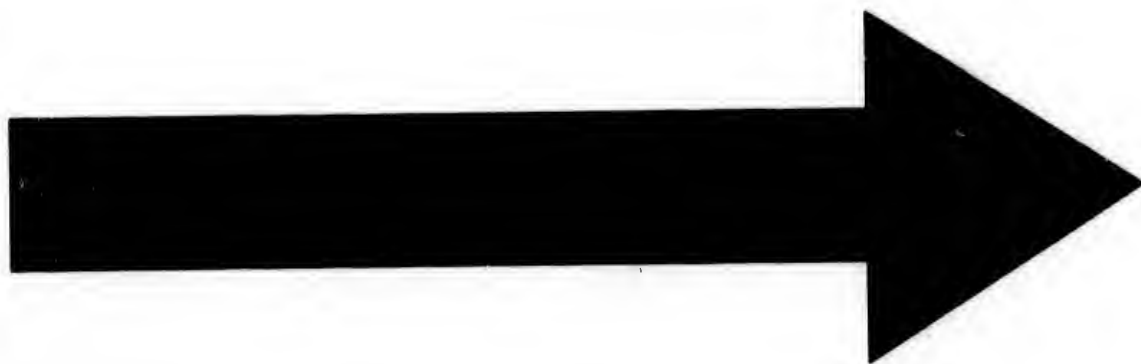
After these little musicals were over, and Seraph descended from her platform amid applause quite loud enough to gratify her ambition, and bring the flush of joy to her pale little face, Cressy would have some dainty ready to serve, — an ice with tiny cakes,

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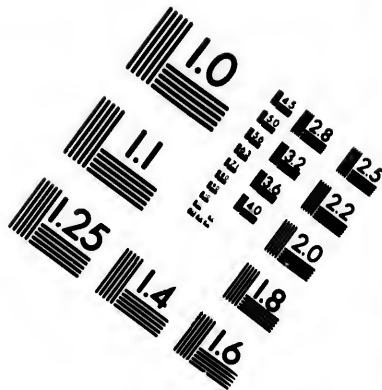
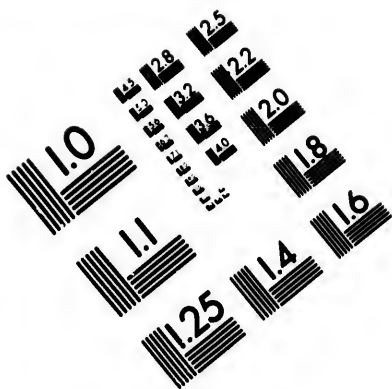
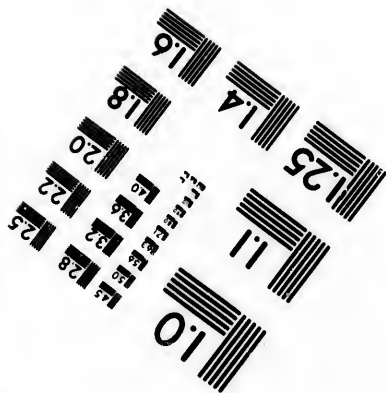
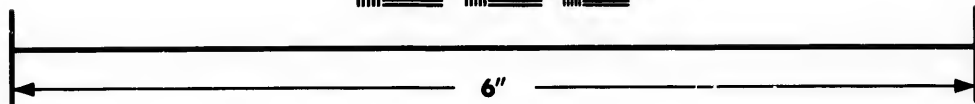
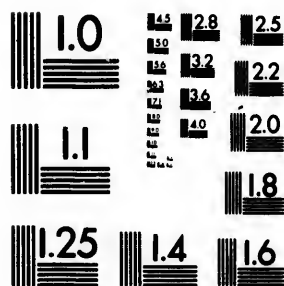


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or fruit and bon-bons, — and Monsieur Nardi's little sitting-room would resound with the merry unaffected laughter of children; and Marc, although a little awkward and shy, a natural result of his neglected childhood, entered into the spirit of the scene with a zest that surprised his benefactor. His natural good taste, his imitativeness, his efforts at self-improvement, were a constant satisfaction.

"He has the stuff in him," the old gentleman would say to himself, "and I mean to give him a chance. I mean to educate him and make him my successor."

While Monsieur Nardi was making his benevolent plans, and while Seraph was enjoying her small triumphs, poor little Louise sat alone in her dull room, with her stained finger-tips pressed to her tired eyes, trying to think of some means of improving their sad condition.

"Spring is coming," she thought, "and we shan't need much fuel nor light now that the days are getting so warm and the sun sets so late. It's astonishing how far Romeo makes the market money go. I give him so little, and he gets so much. Marketing must be very cheap this spring. But Seraph will need clothes; she grows so tall.

I've made everything over as long as I can. I've nothing more to fall back on. Poor child! she needs shoes now, and a hat. It makes my heart ache to see her so shabby. If Cousin Rachel would only think. She has so much money; she might give Seraph something now and then. I should be so glad if she would give her Madge's cast-off things. I have no pride,—it's all gone in the face of this terrible poverty,"—and the hot tears sprang to her eyes and glistened under the closed lids. "Oh, Carl! Carl! if you were only here!" she sobbed; "you were so good, so tender, so generous, and now I have no one. Ah, I must not be ungrateful," and struggling to regain her composure, she dashed away the tears, and set herself to thinking again of ways and means.

"I know Cousin Franz would help me if he could, and our dear old neighbor is so thoughtful. I mustn't be ungrateful, and I must not be weak and complaining; I must try to do more work. I must get up earlier and work later. Oh, if Madame Croizet would only pay me a little more, and if there was any way to retrench! There is only one thing that I can give up, and that is the Ducro Elixir. It costs a dollar a

bottle, and that is a great deal; but Dr. Beaujean says I must have it. It gives me strength to work. I don't know whether I can keep up without it, but I must try. We must have food; Seraph must have shoes. If I could make up my mind to let Cousin Franz sell Carl's violin; but I can't—I can't take it from the child. It may come to that, however. We can't starve, and we can't accept charity while we have anything of value. Oh, how hard life is to the poor and helpless! But I won't despair; God raises up friends for the unfortunate, and when he takes away one support, he sometimes gives us another."

Often these sad cogitations would be interrupted by Seraph rushing in from her concert, flushed and happy, her violin under her arm, and her active little hands full of some offering for her mother.

"Uncle 'Nidas sends this with his compliments, a *bonne bouche pour petite maman*," and Seraph would nestle against her mother, while she chattered as fast as her tongue could fly.

"Oh, mamma, such a success! I played my sonata better than ever. I know Uncle 'Nidas liked it; he looked as if he wanted to cry; and Marc, and even that little lame Jacques, just

jumped up and down, they were so pleased with my caprice. And Uncle 'Nidas says that I play well enough to have a larger audience, and that he will ask some friends to hear me. Think of that, little mamma! Soon, soon I can give big concerts and earn money for you. Then your dear red and green fingers will get white again, and you shall never see flowers, only the real flowers that grow and bloom for you; and you shall be well, mamma; you shall walk and perhaps sing. Who knows? perhaps you will dance like this." And Seraph would spring up and whirl around the room as light as a bird, as brilliant as a butterfly.

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XII.

TWO CUSTOMERS.

ONE morning Monsieur Nardi had two important customers. The first was Madame St. Maxent, who drove up in her fine carriage, with a glossy black coachman, and glossy black buttons, a long-haired Russian poodle, that lay in the bottom of the carriage and served for a rug when the weather was chilly, and two frisky fox terriers, nicely spotted, with ears and tails of the fashionable length.

Madame St. Maxent was an *élégante* in every sense of the word. To begin with, she was of good family; she was a very rich widow, and her elegant mansion on Esplanade Avenue was the envy of her acquaintances as well as a large number of her friends. She had the handsomest carriages, the finest horses, the blackest, glossiest servants, the rarest dogs, and the most costly wardrobe of any one in the smart set. She was an amateur in art and music, a *connoisseuse*

in pictures, bric-a-brac, and old books, a leader in all social affairs, a patroness of talent, and best of all, a generous, large-hearted woman, who was a power in the community.

If a poverty-stricken genius, who was eating his heart out in obscurity, could enlist the interest and patronage of Madame St. Maxent, he would suddenly find himself launched, and sailing triumphantly, the wind of her approval swelling his sails, and speeding him on his voyage swiftly and successfully.

After Monsieur Nardi returned from Paris, he sent this most important customer, and, without boasting, he could say friend,—for the fashionable woman felt a sincere regard for the modest old scholar,—a neat catalogue of his new books, as well as of the rare antiques he had collected during his absence. Therefore he had been expecting a visit from her daily.

When she entered the little shop with breezy cheerfulness, followed by her three dogs, Monsieur Nardi with a beaming face came forward to meet her, smiling and bowing with old-fashioned ceremony.

"*Ah mon cher ami,*" she exclaimed heartily. "I am so glad to get here at last. I have been so

occupied, so many engagements, that this is my first opportunity, and I mean to make the most of it."

At this moment the three dogs, who were less well-bred than their mistress, showed marked signs of hostility to the modest little Monkey, who had taken refuge on the highest chair, where Toto sat with his little hand over his face, as though shocked at such unfriendliness.

It was necessary to send the dogs to the carriage and banish Monkey and the marmoset to the back room before Madame St. Maxent and Monsieur Nardi could proceed with their exchange of friendly compliments.

"Ah, how well you are looking; your trip has done you a world of good. You must be at least ten years younger. Paris, beautiful Paris, has the charm of perpetual youth. I can see by your bright, happy face that you have been to the very fountain head of knowledge, that you have had some delicious draughts. Now tell me what you have discovered, what new wonder you have seen." And the lively lady rushed on in a perfect torrent of small talk, her high-pitched, vivacious voice quite drowning Monsieur Nardi's modest remarks. "Yes, yes, Aldines and Elzevirs — charming, delightful.

And is it true that you have brought me a Delphin with *variorum* notes?"

"It is really true, Madame. I have a genuine antique," replied Monsieur Nardi, his face beaming with pleasure. "I thought of you when I discovered it, and ventured to buy it, although it came high. They are rare, extremely rare, and the Elzevir is good,—a Pliny, 1636."

"A 1636 Elzevir,—how interesting! How charming! But show me all your treasures, and, my dear friend, be very considerate. Remember my weakness. Please don't let me have all I want."

Monsieur Nardi laughed pleasantly as he spread the books on a table and drew up a chair for Madame St. Maxent. At a sign Marc had taken each *bouquin* carefully from a glass-covered case, and dusted it with an old silk handkerchief.

"This is in very good condition," said Madame St. Maxent, examining the Delphin reverently. "I must have it, *mon ami*, and we won't haggle. I know you won't overcharge me. Ah, really; a vellum Aldine? Now you have touched my very weakest point. I adore vellum. You may put that with the Delphin."

"I had another Aldine, a Theocritus, 1595, which

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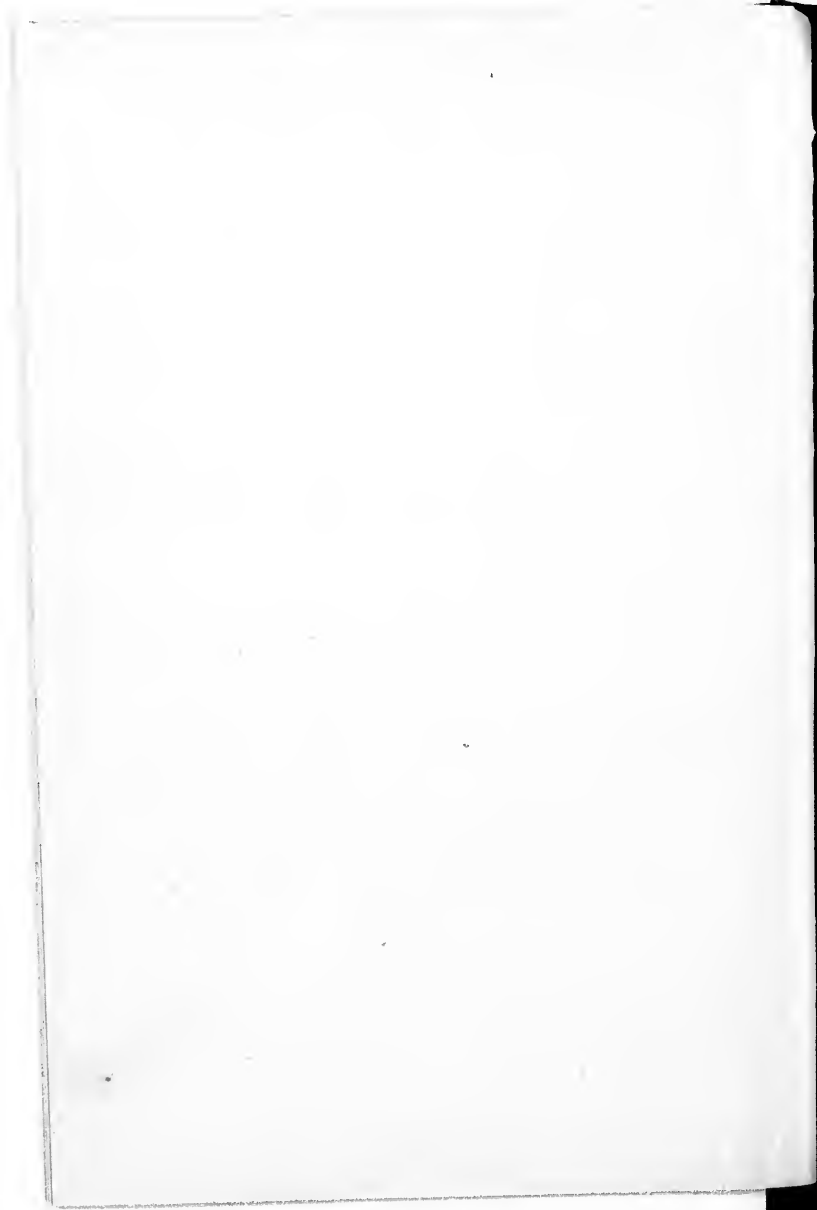
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MALAME ET MAHEUT. — MONSIEUR NARDI'S SHOP.



I sold a few days ago to a young Lutheran minister," said Monsieur Nardi, with a little regret in his tone. "Although it is an advantage to dispose of them — will you believe it? — I hate to part with my treasures."

Then followed a long discussion on *livres d'occasion*, very learned and highly interesting to a *bouquinier*, about the veracity of a Venice Boiardo, the genuineness of a Verard, and the condition of several volumes from the Barbou collection, the excellence of the various Foulis editions, and the authenticity of a copy of Brandt's "Ship of Fools." After that, bindings were touched upon, — the rival merits of Grolier and Payne; and Monsieur Nardi convinced Madame St. Maxent that a book they were examining had an original Grolier binding, by tracing out the nearly obliterated motto, *Grolieri et Amicorum*.

After Madame St. Maxent had made a selection of the books she desired, aired her knowledge, and discussed her pet hobby to her heart's content, she arose to go. Then Monsieur Nardi remembered to ask after the health of Maurice, her only child, a boy of sixteen, who was a violin virtuoso of much skill and talent.

"Maurice? Oh, Maurice is very well, thank you, and as much as ever interested in his violin. I often tell him that if he only had the spur of poverty to drive him on, the world might hear of him; as it is, he will never be anything but an amateur."

"Oh, Madame, I have a little neighbor, a little girl who plays the violin *comme un petit ange*. I wish you could hear her; she is wonderful, she is a prodigy!"

Monsieur Nardi spoke so earnestly, so feelingly, that Madame St. Maxent looked at him with some curiosity as she replied, "As a general thing, I do not like infant prodigies, but as she is a *protégé* of yours, if you wish it, I will arrange to hear her some day; and perhaps I can help her along. You know, my friend, you can always count on me. I will think it over and let you know what I can do."

"*Merci, merci bien,*" returned Monsieur Nardi warmly, as he handed Madame St. Maxent to her carriage. "I am much interested in the child; she is fatherless and poor, and so lovely and talented. If I can depend on you to assist me, I think she has a successful future before her."

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"Well, we will see what can be done; *au revoir, mon ami, au revoir et bientôt.*" And Madame St. Maxent drove away well satisfied with her visit.

Scarcely had she gone, and before Monsieur Nardi had time to return his antiques to their case, another customer entered. It was Cousin Franz, and his long, serious face wore an expression of perplexity and disappointment. After a few desultory remarks, he said reluctantly:

"I am very sorry, Monsieur Nardi, that I cannot take the Foulis Horace as I hoped to do when I was last here. Circumstances have occurred which make it necessary to save the money I intended to spend on it. I would not be justified in indulging myself at present. If in the future I can see my way clear, and it is not sold, I will take it; but please do not retain it for me."

"As you like, Monsieur," replied Monsieur Nardi cheerfully. "If in the meantime I find a customer for this copy, I daresay, when you wish it, I can procure you another."

After Cousin Franz had ordered a few books of less value than the Foulis, and had looked over the new catalogue with the feeling of a hungry man who sees food before him and cannot partake of it,

he went away in a not very amiable frame of mind.

He wanted to look in on Louise, to learn if Seraph still adhered to her promise to practise three hours a day; but he felt that he had already done a great deal for his cousin's wife and child, when he had denied himself the much-coveted book in order to save the money for their future needs.

That same evening, Seraph came in from her visit to Monsieur Nardi in a state of great excitement.

"Oh, mamma," she cried joyously. "A great lady, a rich lady who lives on Esplanade Avenue, has promised Uncle 'Nidas to hear me play. Perhaps she will invite me to her beautiful house, and if I please her, she will help me to become a great violiniste. Uncle 'Nidas says I could not have a better friend. Oh, mamma dearest, I *must* practise now that I am to play for Uncle 'Nidas's friend. You *must* give me time to practise. Please excuse me one hour a day from the piano, so that I can learn a new sonata."

"Seraph, I can't promise you that," returned Madame Blumenthal tremulously. "I must consult Cousin Franz before I can consent. You know we must not offend Cousin Franz."

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XIII.

A DISAPPOINTMENT.

IF any one had told Monsieur Nardi that he was not a good judge of character, he would have resented it as a false conclusion.

"I have never found myself mistaken when I have once formed an opinion of a person," he had been heard to say. "I do not decide hastily in one's favor, neither do I condemn one simply on appearances. I must have strong evidence, and if the evidence is not conclusive beyond a doubt, I always give the accused the benefit of the doubt."

Without Marc being aware of it, Monsieur Nardi had made a great many inquiries about him. First he interviewed Patsy, the watchman, who spoke of the boy with the warmest praise.

"He's as fine an' honest a kid as I ever happened to come across, an' fer a little wharf rat, he's got the best manners an' more good principles than some children that's brought up by a daddy an' mammy, in a fine house. I've knowed him ever

since I've been about the levee. When I got this job, he wasn't more'n four years old, a runnin' 'round the wharves an' luggers. An old Dago man named Joe used to take him off on trips, an' sort o' look after him, when he was right small, but Joe died of yaller fever, an' then if I'd a had a missis, I'd a took the young one an' 'dopted him, but I didn't have no one to look out fer him, so I jes' kep' my eye on him here, an' he ain't suffered.

"He's al'ays had plenty to eat, an' a warm place to sleep, an' that's more'n a good many kids gits that lives in houses, an' I've giv him breeches an' shirts, an' he's been clean an' whole, considerin'. No, sir, no; Dago Joe didn't know nothin' 'bout where the kid come from. I asked him many a time, but he didn't know nothin'. Joe found him one night on an old cast-off flatboat, a cryin' in a bunk, poor little kid! all alone a cryin', an' he took him on his lugger an' looked out for him as long as he lived.

"That's all I know, sir. Joe named him Marco, an' we calls him Marc, for short. He's a mighty sharp little chap. Jes' look how he's learned himself to read. I tole him the letters. Yes, sir, that's about all I showed him, an' I made a few figgers

When I got this old, a runnin' old Dago man on trips, an' sort of small, but Joe had a missis, pted him, but I r him, so I jes' in't suffered. an' a warm place d many kids gits him breeches an' whole, considerin'. ow nothin' 'bout sked him many a . Joe found him boat, a cryin' in a cryin', an' he took at for him as long named him Marco, rt. He's a mighty w he's learned him- ers. Yes, sir, that's made a few figgers

on an old slate he picked up, an' I'm be blessed if he wasn't addin' 'em up in no time, like a book-keeper. I tell you he's sharp, an' you can bet he's honest. I never knew a honester kid. If he picked up a nickel, he couldn't put it in his pocket 'til he ast all 'round if it belonged to enny one."

Monsieur Nardi had not questioned Patsy in order to secure testimonial of character, but to try to learn something of the boy's parentage. However, this spontaneous praise was very gratifying to the old bookseller, and only confirmed him in his belief that he had uncommon discernment as far as human characteristics were concerned. In his kindly, generous heart he had already marked out a successful career for his little *protégé*. He would adopt him, educate him, and make him his successor.

He was one of those unfortunate little waifs, thought Monsieur Nardi, one of those deserted little children who usually drifted into orphan asylums or houses of correction. Providence had ordered that this one should drift into his empty heart and home, and he meant to accept this gift gratefully, and do his very best to save the poor little weed, the outcast scrap of humanity, to

plant it in new soil, to cultivate and nourish it until it should become a flower fit for the garden of the Lord.

Full of generous intentions and strong confidence, Monsieur Nardi was in no condition to accept the blow that fell upon him, suddenly shattering all his well-considered plans.

It was such a little thing, so commonplace, and almost vulgar, that one can hardly conceive of its bringing about such ruinous results. One morning Cressy brought in the change from a five-dollar note, which she had broken for her marketing, and handed it, as usual, to her master. Monsieur Nardi was standing by the open window, clipping some truant branches from a climbing rose. His hands being engaged, he told Cressy to leave the money on a small table beside the window, and after he had finished his work he went away, forgetting to put it in his pocket. An hour or so later he thought of it, and, much to his surprise, when he went for it, it was gone.

In his small and well-regulated household he had been accustomed to finding things just where he placed them, and this new departure rather annoyed him. With some impatience in his tone he called

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to Cressy to know where she had put the money, and to his astonishment she told him that she had not seen it since she gave it to him. He had no cause to doubt Cressy's word. *For twenty years or more she had been his housekeeper, and he had had no reason to suspect her honesty.

Thinking that Marc might have seen the money lying on the table and removed it to a safer place, he questioned him carefully and kindly, and, much to his disappointment, the boy said decidedly that he had not seen it. There was no one beside Cressy and Marc who could have had access to it.

Had poor old Romeo been about the place that morning, he might have been suspected; but his mind was at rest on that point. The side gate was always locked, and the old negro could not enter without being admitted by Cressy. Therefore it lay between the servant and the boy. It could not be his honest, faithful old servant. Could it be Marc, and he had denied it!

For a moment Monsieur Nardi felt cold and weak, and something seemed to be clutching at his heart. The boy stood before him, flushing and paling under his kindly but searching glance; and knowing human nature as well as he did, he thought

this emotion indicated guilt. He intended, however, to be just; he would not condemn him without positive proof. If Marc knew that he was suspected, it would destroy his self-respect. Therefore, it was necessary to conceal his uncertainty and perplexity. Disguising his feelings as well as he could, he said with assumed cheerfulness and confidence:

"*Eh bien, mon enfant*, I dare say it will turn up. We have no dishonest people about us. It can only be mislaid."

Marc gave Monsieur Nardi a pitifully appealing look as he turned silently away. It seemed as though it were a mute entreaty for mercy. Then for the first time the old bookseller felt how strong a hold the child had on his heart.

All day Marc went about his duties with a silent, dejected air, and at times Monsieur Nardi thought the boy looked frightened and anxious, and he had the timid, uncertain manner of a persecuted little dog who is always expecting a blow, and who from habit shrinks even from the hand that would caress it.

That night Marc sat huddled up in the dark, in his little room on the back gallery. His only companion was the marmoset, who nestled close to his

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neck and patted his cheek with its little soft hands. He was crying silently, and Toto brushed off the hot tears as they fell from his eyes. Never before in his wretched life had he felt so utterly outcast and forlorn. A half-hour before, sitting there, he had overheard a conversation between Cressy and Romeo, as they talked across the high fence. They did not mean for him to hear it. They did not know he was in his room, and what he heard almost broke his heart.

"Of course," said Cressy, "he took the money. What else can you expect from a little wharf rat?"

"Miss Cressy, does yer think yer boss s'pects him?" asked Romeo.

"Why, certainly; but Monsieur Leonidas is so good, so honest, himself, that he won't be in a hurry to say so. He'll hope the money'll be found, and then when it don't turn up he'll know the boy took it."

"Miss Cressy, does yer s'pose yer boss'll have der cops a'ter him, have him 'rested; run in, yer know?"

"I shouldn't wonder, Romeo. Monsieur Leonidas is a very just man, and if he knows he's guilty he may have him punished. He deserves it. I never approved of such a boy being brought into the house.

Them wharf *gamin* think no more of stealing than they do of eating."

"I 'spect yer right, Miss Cressy. Yer such a fine smart lady no one can take lil' things 'thout yer knowin' it, now can dey?"

"Not much, Romeo; I'm bound to look out for my master's property, and I hate picking and stealing."

"Yer right, Miss Cressy; shore yer right. Good night, I guess I'll go an' lay my ole bones down and res' awhile. I' mighty tired, I is. Lor' bress yer, an' good night."

When all was silent, Marc got up cautiously, and went out into the yard. The blind of the sitting-room was open, a reading-lamp burned on the table. Monsieur Nardi was there with a number of books before him; but he was not reading, he sat with his head on his hand looking very sad and thoughtful. The window, the same window where the table stood, was open, and Marc softly pushed Toto into the room.

Monsieur Nardi looked up as the little animal sprang to his knee, and although he stroked and petted it gently, one could see that he was preoccupied and worried.

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A DISAPPOINTMENT.

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The boy stood without, looking for some time at the old gentleman. The tears were still in his eyes, but his face had a touch of anger in it, a sort of stubborn pride mingled with sorrow and surprise. After a few moments, wiping his eyes impatiently, he went out to the side gate. It was locked as usual, and Cressy had the key. He hesitated for a moment, then with the agility of a cat he scrambled up the high fence and dropped down into the street. For a short time he stood as if undecided where to go; then he drew himself up and walked resolutely away.

XIV.

MADAME CROIZET'S GENEROSITY.

MADAME BLUMENTHAL had been unusually feeble for several days, and her dainty labor had been performed under difficulties; a bridal *parure* of orange blossoms and lilies of the valley, of exceptional delicacy and perfection, had been ordered, and Madame Croizet had requested Louise to spare no pains in its manufacture.

Poor little invalid, she had failed perceptibly since she had been deprived of the much-needed tonic. Seraph fretted about it to Romeo, and begged him to try to get the Ducro Elixir, by some means, for her *pauvre petite maman*, who was suffering for it, and the faithful old servant's heart was wrung with sorrow because he was unable to comply with his little mistress' request.

With all his deceptions and economies, assisted by the generosity of Monsieur Nardi and Cressy, he could scarcely provide necessary nourishment for a feeble invalid and a healthy child. At times

he was reduced to the most pitiful straits; but he usually succeeded, with the aid of Cressy, in concealing the gravity of the situation from his mistress.

The *parure* was finished after infinite weariness and pain, and it was so exquisitely natural, so pure, so delicate, that Louise hung over it, enraptured with her own work. She had spread the garlands in a large flat basket, among folds of soft paper, and was waiting for Romeo to carry them to their destination. While she waited and gazed on the beautiful flowers, emblematic of youth and happiness, she fell to thinking of her past, of her toil, her ambition, and her short-lived triumph, and of her present sad condition, her weakness, her poverty, and her inability to longer struggle with the cruel destiny that had overtaken her. Tears of despair filled her eyes and fell on the bridal wreath. She wiped them away hastily; a drop of sorrow might stain their purity. No, no, she must not weep, she must be strong for the sake of her child; she must conceal her anxiety, her suffering, from that bright young life; she must bear up, and toil and strive while life remained to her.

She heard Seraph, in the back room, as far away as she could get, practising her violin exercises, scraping, and running trills up and down the strings, from one chord to another, wildly mirthful or wailing sorrowfully. In her present nervous condition she could not endure the sound. It seemed as if the flexible bow was drawn over her tense nerves. It tortured her and almost maddened her, and for the time she felt that she would give anything to be rid of the instrument of her torment.

Presently Romeo came to take the basket of flowers. He had been trying to make himself decent; but his carefully preserved coat and best hat bore the unmistakable marks of age and poverty. Nevertheless he looked a respectable and reliable old servant who had seen better days. Looking at his mistress, and seeing the traces of tears, his face worked pitifully, but he said cheerfully:

"You's feelin' a lil' down dis mawnin', Miss Louise. It's no use, yer can't git erlong widout dat Jew-crow. Yer mus' have it, an' I's er gwine ter git it fer yer."

"Oh, Romeo, you mustn't. I can't spare the

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money. If Madame Croizet would only pay me something more, I might be able to get a bottle. Romeo, ask her if she will please pay me a little more. Tell her that they have been very difficult, and double the work of ordinary flowers. If you explain how ill I am, and ask her very politely, I think she will be generous and give me an extra price."

"I'll tell her, shore, Miss Louise. I'll tell her. I knows how ter speak ter a lady. I'll jes' s'plain how yer done wore yer pore eyes out over dese triffin' flowers, an' she'll gib me more; doan' fret, Miss Louise, she'll gib me more, I's shore she will." And with this comforting assurance Romeo took the basket and went out.

Scarcely had Romeo's footsteps passed out of hearing, when there was a tap at the door and Cousin Franz entered. He scowled with displeasure as the strains of the violin sounded from the back room. Had Seraph known who was listening she would not have played such rollicking notes. As it was, Cousin Franz felt that there was a sort of defiance in the light bold strains, and he spoke very sharply as he drew a chair near Louise.

"There she is at it again. Really, it seems as

if the child were possessed with an evil spirit when she gets that violin in her hands."

Just then a long-drawn-out, uncanny wail from the back room made Louise shiver and Cousin Franz almost spring from his seat.

"They are horrible, the exercises she selects; they are fiendish, they are demoralizing," said Cousin Franz, a hot flush passing over his face.

"Oh, Franz, don't blame the poor child for the character of the music she plays. She uses her father's old books. I can't afford to buy her new music."

"And you allow her to go on scraping and screaming as though she were a little savage?"

"I can't prevent her, really I can't. Monsieur Nardi thinks very highly of her playing, and he encourages her to practise. Madame St. Maxent is a friend of our neighbor, and she has promised him to hear Seraph play some time, and the child is so ambitious, she is preparing for it; she is studying every spare moment."

"You surely will not allow her to take up the violin. If she once plays to an audience, she will get a taste for it, and it will be impossible to break her of it. Louise, you are making a serious mistake; you should refuse decidedly."

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"But think, Franz, of the advantage to her in interesting a woman as influential as Madame St. Maxent. She must depend, for future success, on the patronage and kindness of the rich."

"That is true; but let her secure that patronage in a dignified and proper way. Let her play the piano. She can display her musical talent as well on the piano as on the violin. You know there is a feeling against feminine violin-players—some consider it unwomanly, immodest. She never could secure pupils, and do you wish her to go about making a spectacle of herself as something *outré* and unconventional?"

"Oh, Cousin Franz, I think you are extreme in your views. I am told that in other places *ladies* play the violin. It is quite fashionable. And I am discouraged about the piano. Seraph does not like the piano, and she will never excel on it. I don't know what to do. I feel as though I cannot struggle with her any longer. I am tired and worn out with trying to force her to practise. I feel that I must give up to her and let her take her own course. Oh! I wish some one would decide the matter for me. I wish I could be relieved of all responsibility and uncertainty. I

am not strong enough to cope with Seraph's determination."

"Do you really wish to be relieved?" asked Cousin Franz alertly. "Now, Louise, you are beginning to be reasonable. Well, leave it to me, and I will think of some plan before long, and whatever I may do you will not reproach me afterward?"

"No; not if it is for Seraph's good, and I am sure you have her interest as much at heart as I have."

"Yes, Louise, trust me; I will act for her best interest."

For a moment neither spoke, but the violin went on wailing and sobbing like the cry of a broken heart.

At length Cousin Franz arose to go, and as he took Louise's stained fingers in his, he slipped an envelope in her hand. "It may help you a little," he said kindly. "You must let me do it for Carl's sake."

Louise said nothing, but dropped her hot face in her hands. When she looked up, Cousin Franz was gone and she was alone. Just then the violin broke out into such a wildly triumphant and jubilant strain, that to the grateful invalid it seemed a song of thanksgiving.

"I done tole yer dat Madame Croizet was a fine, gen'rous lady," cried Romeo, entering at that moment. "Why, Miss Louise, when she foun' out how porely you was, she jes' said, 'Suttenly, Romeo, suttenly, yere's two dollars extra fer yer mist'ess.' So I done bought yer bottle of Jew-crow, an' I wish, Miss Louise, yer'd let me take dat oder dollar an' buy dat pore chile a pair o' shoes; her lil' footses is mos' on der groun'."

"Blessings never come singly," thought Louise thankfully, as she removed the wrapper from the bottle and prepared to take a spoonful of the much-needed tonic.

"Really, I am surprised at Madame Croizet's generosity," she said. "When I asked a little extra for the roses she refused, and now she sends me more than I expected. Yes, Romeo, you can buy the shoes for Seraph."

XV.

WITHOUT WINGS.

THE next morning after the money was missing, Monsieur Nardi descended to his shop in a rather uncomfortable frame of mind, and was surprised to see Cressy dusting and putting things in order after her ancient custom.

"Why, Cressy, how is this? Where is Marc?" he asked, with a puzzled look.

"I don't know, monsieur; he is not here; I think he climbed the fence and went away last night."

"Why, Cressy, you surprise me. Why should he go away without telling me?"

"I think he was afraid, monsieur; I think he was guilty, and he thought you might have him punished."

"Oh, Cressy, *ma bonne*, you don't think him guilty, do you?" asked Monsieur Nardi, his voice faltering as he spoke.

"It looks very bad, monsieur, his running away."

"Yes, it looks badly, certainly; but I can't think the boy dishonest. I am never mistaken in my estimate of character, and Marc cannot be guilty."

"I am sorry to undeceive you, monsieur, but the boy wasn't honest in little things. For the first time since I've been in your service, I've missed food and groceries; not much at a time, it's true, but just enough to convince me that some one about here was picking and stealing. I suppose he took them to some of his riff-raff on the levee."

"Oh, poor child! If I thought he took food to some one who was hungry, I could not blame him."

"But he should have asked, monsieur; he should have asked."

"*Oui, oui, Cressy, ma bonne*, he should have asked, it is true; but no doubt he was shy and a little afraid. And you must remember that he has never been taught the nice differences between right and wrong. Why, I daresay he thought it was right to take from one who has plenty to give to one who has nothing."

Poor Monsieur Nardi, in his desire to defend

Marc, suddenly found himself floundering in the depths of a social problem, from which he hastened to extricate himself with some confusion. "You know, Cressy, I don't mean to say that I think it would be right, but the child in his ignorance might look at it in that way. I am very much worried. I must try to find him, poor little lad! and I must teach him to *ask* for what he wants."

"If I might venture to advise you, monsieur, I should say that you had better not bring him back. If you do, he'll make you more trouble."

"Thank you, Cressy, but I shall judge of that myself," returned Monsieur Nardi, a little stiffly, as he took his hat and went out.

His destination was the levee, where he hoped to find Patsy, the watchman. After some searching he came across the old man sitting on a bale of cotton, watching with sorrowful, anxious eyes a huge steamer swiftly disappearing around a bend in the river.

"Good morning, my friend," said Monsieur Nardi kindly.

"Good morning, sir," returned the old man, getting stiffly to his feet, his watchful eyes still

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fixed on the spot where only the smoke of the ship was visible.

"I came down to ask you if you had seen Marc this morning," began Monsieur Nardi cautiously. "There was a little trouble yesterday,—a little misunderstanding,—and the boy might have thought I blamed him. Well, in short, he went away last night without my knowledge, and I want to find him to explain, to talk the matter over. I suppose he came to you."

"Yes, sir, he come to me; poor little shaver, he was all broke up. He told me about it, about the money bein' took—"

"But I didn't accuse him," interrupted Monsieur Nardi. "Although circumstances are against him, I can't think he took it."

"He didn't, sir, he didn't. My old life ain't worth much, but I'd stake it on the boy's innocence. I never knowed an honest youngster. The fellers used to poke fun at him; when he come across a nickel he was al'ays so sot on findin' an owner for it. Poor little chap! I was right sorry for him. We sot here nearly all night a talkin' of it over. He was cut up to think you s'spected him."

"I, Patsy? I was very careful that he should not think I suspected him. Why should he think so?"

"He overheard your colored woman say that you thought he'd took it, an' he said he couldn't sleep another night in your house, if you b'lieved he was a thief, so he jest took an' lit out secret like."

"I didn't, Patsy, I didn't," said Monsieur Nardi decidedly. "I must see him and convince him. I must have a talk with him at once."

"You can't, sir; he's on that English steamer that's just went around the bend. He's on his way to Liverpool."

"On his way to Liverpool?" and Monsieur Nardi sat down on the cotton bale, as suddenly and weakly as if he had received a blow. "Really, this is a shock. Gone! — gone away without my seeing him, without convincing him! and I had so much to say to him. I intended to take him home with me. I intended to show him that I had confidence in him. It's a sad disappointment; I liked the boy, Patsy, I liked him."

"An' he was that fond of you, sir, an' all them books, that it most broke the little feller's heart to go off an' leave it all."

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"But wh^y did he go so soon? Why didn't he
wait to see me?"

"Well, you see, sir, if there's one thing in crea-
tion them little wharf rats is afraid of, it's coppers.
They're brought up to be afraid of 'em 'cause they
knows they'll be run in for mos' nothin', an' Marc
he thought you might have him 'rested on s'picion,
so he lit out, an' he had a first-rate chance. The
cabin-boy on that ship didn't turn up this mornin'.
They didn't want to put to sea without one, so I
spoke a good word for Marc, an' they took me
right up. The little lad was down in the mouth
to go off so sudden like, but he's got plenty o'
sand, he has, an' he'll chirp up an' be as chipper as
a bird 'fore he gits to the Gulf."

"When do you think he will be back?" asked
Monsieur Nardi, in a tremulous voice.

"Oh, nobody can't tell that. He might come
back on the same ship, an' he might conclude to
stay over there."

"Well, I must find some means of communicat-
ing with the boy. I must try to induce him to
come back. I can't give him up. Thank you,
Patsy, for your information," and Monsieur Nardi
walked away with bent head and uncertain steps.

It seemed as if he were suddenly surrounded with the ruins of his shattered hopes.

"Oh, mamma, I've some good news for you," cried Seraph, one morning, rushing joyously into her mother's room. "Madame St. Maxent and Monsieur Maurice are coming to-morrow to hear me play. Uncle 'Nidas has arranged it all. What shall I wear? I must look nice, and I *must* practise all day to-day. Yes, mamma, you must let me have all day."

"My dear child, you are making me suffer too much," cried Louise piteously. "Only last evening I promised Cousin Franz to insist on your resuming your practice on the piano. He was here after you went to bed, and lectured me severely because I allowed you to play for Monsieur Nardi. Now, listen a moment, darling, and be reasonable. Won't you help your poor little mother to keep her promise to Cousin Franz? You know how good he is. He is denying himself to help us, and it is for your own interest to give up the violin. Seraph, won't you listen to me? Won't you give it up?"

"I can't, mamma, I can't," cried the child passionately. "I couldn't live without my violin. It is

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all I have to make me happy, to lift me up, up
to the sky. I should be like a bird without wings,
mamma. Think what a bird would be without wings.
Suppose it could only crawl and creep in the
shadows, and never fly in the sunlight. Don't
you *feel*, mamma, that I can't give up my violin?"

"Yes, my darling, I *feel* it, and that is why I
suffer so; but let me tell you something. Long
ago I felt as you do. I felt that I could not give
up my singing; I struggled against my dear mother's
wishes, until at last she yielded to me. I was
wrong. Seraph, look at me; I am the poor maimed
bird without wings."

The child's face grew pale, and her eyes filled
with tears. "Yes, mamma, I know; but your
mother did not do it."

"No, my mother did not do it, but I disobeyed
her, and I was punished. I was deprived of my
wings."

"Poor mamma!" sobbed Seraph, clinging to her
mother's neck and kissing her. "I won't disobey
you again. I *will* study the piano every day. I
can do both, I can play on both; only allow me to
practise my violin to-day, because Uncle 'Nidas has
promised for me. Say yes, *petite maman*, and you

will see how good I can be." And Seraph wiped away her tears and went hurriedly to get her violin, while her mother was in a relenting mood.

With eager, trembling hands she raised the cover of the case. It was empty, the violin was gone!

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XVI.

THE WOUNDED BIRD.

WHEN Seraph opened the violin case and saw that it was empty, she flew to her mother, and clutching her fiercely by the shoulder, cried in a voice of passionate resentment, "Mamma, where is my violin? Tell me where it is!"

For the first time poor Louise cowered under the searching look of her child, and her face crimsoned with a feeling akin to guilt, but with a desperate effort to be calm and decided she said firmly:

"Seraph, you are forgetting yourself. You are not respectful. Control your temper, and I will answer you. Cousin Franz must have taken the violin with him last evening. I did not know it was gone, but I knew that he intended to sell it."

"Oh, mamma, how could you?" exclaimed Seraph, her wide eyes full of dismay. "How could you sell papa's violin? How could you?"

"I did not wish to, my child. It hurts me as deeply as it hurts you," faltered Louise; "but

Cousin Franz insisted. He made me feel that it was my duty; but I did not think he intended to do it just yet. I did not know he intended to take it last night."

"It was gone last night! He took it last night, and I thought it was there in its little bed! Oh, mamma! what can I do?" And she wrung her hands and looked at her mother appealingly.

"My darling, don't look that way; don't take on so; be calm, be reasonable," pleaded Louise. "It is not so serious. It is not a living thing."

"It is a living thing to me, mamma. It is more than a living thing. I can't tell you, I can't explain *how* I feel about it. Oh, mamma! he took it only last night. Perhaps he has not sold it yet; perhaps he still has it. I must go to him and beg him to give it back to me."

"My dear child, it will be useless. Your Cousin Franz has decided to sell it, and he is not one to change easily. I know it is useless to go to him."

"It is not; I will go," she cried, angrily stamping her little foot. "It is mine; he has no right to take my violin and sell it. I will go to him and tell him so."

"Seraph, you forget that Cousin Franz has a

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Cousin Franz has a

right; he is your guardian. It was your father's wish that he should take care of us. We have no one else to depend upon. I implore you not to rebel against Cousin Franz's authority."

"Mamma, I am going to him, and if he has the violin, I shall make him give it to me," repeated Seraph firmly. "I shall not come away without it."

"Oh, my child, I beg of you, do nothing rash," pleaded Louise weakly, while Seraph, her face white and resolute and her eyes aflame with a sense of wrong and injustice, prepared to face her stern Cousin Franz.

"Mamma, I shall tell Cousin Franz the truth. You know it is not right to rob me that way, and he knows it. He should have told me that he intended to sell it. Now, mamma dear, don't fret; I *must* go. I will walk as quickly as I can, and if I get the violin, I shall *fly* back. If it is not gone, he must let me have it, at least until I have played for Madame St. Maxent."

It was quite a long walk from St. Louis Street to Grande Route St. John, where Cousin Franz lived, but Seraph did not feel the distance. So fearful was she of being too late, that she ran breathlessly the greater part of the way, and when she

reached the gate and rang, she could hardly wait for the servant to open it.

Madame Arnet was sitting on the gallery busy with her needlework, when Seraph, her face flushed and her eyes eager and anxious, rushed hurriedly up the steps, saying as she came, "*Bon jour*, Cousin Rachel; please can I see Cousin Franz, now, directly?"

"Why, Seraph, what is the matter? What has happened?" asked Madame Arnet, with as much animation as she was capable of showing. "Dear child, you are so excited. Is it bad news?"

"I want to see Cousin Franz at once," insisted Seraph curtly and decidedly. "Can I go to his study?"

"He is not in his study; he has gone out," replied Madame Arnet, with irritating calmness. "Perhaps you can sit down, my dear, and tell *me* what has happened."

"No, no, Cousin Rachel, I can't sit down; only tell me, did he take my violin with him; has he — has he sold it?"

"Oh, the violin. Mr. Arnet has been for some time bargaining with the purchaser; he thought it important to get the most possible. I think he

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took it to the man last night. He didn't bring it home with him. He has gone now to take your mamma the money—a nice sum, which I hope she will use prudently. Mr. Arnet is denying himself a great many necessary books in order to help your mother. I trust that you appreciate his kindness as you should."

Seraph did not hear the last part of Madame Arnet's friendly remarks. With a heartbroken cry, she threw herself down on the step, and buried her face in her hands, while her little shoulders shook with sobs.

"Why, child, what are you crying about? I thought you would be thankful for the money." And Madame Arnet rose calmly, and laying down her work, went slowly toward the little weeper, with a puzzled look on her stolid face. "Dear me, I wish Mr. Arnet was here. I don't know what to do with such an excitable child."

Happily for her, at that moment Cousin Franz arrived. With a gentleness and tenderness quite unexpected in one so apparently severe and cold, he lifted Seraph's tearful face, and said kindly, "Come, my child, come with me into my study. I want to talk with you calmly and reasonably, and

I think I can convince you that I have done what was best. I have just left your mother; she is very unhappy. We must try to make her feel better."

"Oh, Cousin Franz, is it too—too late? Is it really sold?" cried Seraph, grasping his hand desperately.

"Yes, it is sold, and we cannot get it back. Now, Seraph, sit down and let me reason with you."

"But, dear Cousin Franz, if you should go to the man who bought it, and tell him that it was all a little girl had, that—that it was her dead papa's. Oh, if you will tell him how unhappy I am, I think—I am sure—he will give it back."

"Impossible, my dear; it is a business transaction of importance. It is a very old and very rare violin. A dealer has been for some time trying to buy it for a customer, and I have spent much time and made great efforts to get the price I asked. At last I have closed the bargain, delivered the violin, and received the money. It is too late now."

"But why did you take it without my knowing it? Why didn't you let me say good by to it?"

"Seraph, I thought it best. I wished to spare

you sorrow, or, to be exact, I wished to spare myself sorrow. I am not hard-hearted, my dear child; I am not making you suffer willingly. I know you loved your father's violin; I, too, love everything that belonged to him; for that reason I am trying to help you to make your life happy and useful. There are times in our lives when we must suffer, and not always for ourselves alone, but for the welfare of others. You are so young that perhaps you cannot understand how sweet and holy it may be to suffer for others. You love your poor afflicted mother, do you not, Seraph?"

"Oh, Cousin Franz, you know how I love mamma. You *know*," she replied reproachfully, as if a doubt were a wrong to her.

"Then, my dear, are you not willing to suffer a little, in order to give her some comfort, to ease her poor anxious mind, to save her a few hours' toil? to provide those little necessities which give her strength and life? By depriving yourself of a pleasure, and one which is a doubtful good, you are adding years, perhaps, to your mother's life. Think it over, my child; look at it calmly and dispassionately from my point of view, and then tell me if you regret the sacrifice."

Poor little Seraph! She was very young to have the burden of such a decision laid upon her, but she grappled with it heroically. She grasped the beautiful truth, dimly and incompletely, perhaps, but it comforted her. It was cruel, — it was heart-breaking to give up so much of her life, but for her mother she felt able to do it. And Cousin Franz comforted himself with the thought that he had acted wisely, and that in the end his little *protégé* would recognize the fact.

Stifling her sobs, and wiping away the rebellious tears which she could not repress, Seraph prepared herself to take up her new rôle of submission and self-sacrifice. In the first flush of her resolve it was not so difficult, and as Cousin Franz bade her good by at the gate she looked up and smiled hopefully. "Thank you, Cousin Franz. I think I understand, and I'll try to bear it for mamma's sake."

But the poor little feet were not swift as she returned home. She did not *fly*. She began to be dimly conscious that she had lost her wings; that she was a wounded bird.

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XVII.

PEACH BLOSSOMS.

WHEN Seraph returned home, she went directly to her mother, and putting her arms around the poor little invalid, said sweetly, and with no trace of her former passionate emotion, "Mamma, forgive me for being so angry. Cousin Franz has made me feel how wrong I was. He has made me understand *why* I cannot have my violin. I will give it up and try to forget it, and I will do everything I can to help you, and make you happy. I will practise the piano, and try to make it take the place of my violin."

"Oh, my darling, my darling!" was all Louise could say, as she kissed the pale little face, grown so suddenly mature and thoughtful.

"Now, *chère petite maman*, you feel better, don't you? You will see what a good child I can be when I try. I must go to Uncle 'Nidas and tell him that I can't play for Madame St. Maxent tomorrow."

The effort of self-control in the soft little voice made Louise's heart ache, and had she been able, she would have gladly wiped out the preceding twenty-four hours, and made her child happy again. But it was too late; she had been taught her first bitter lesson of submission and renunciation, and nothing could obliterate the impression it had made on her plastic mind.

Neither was Uncle 'Nidas very happy these days. He missed Marc sorely. The boy had really grown into his heart, even in so short a time; but it was not only in his affections that he was wounded: his *amour propre* had suffered a severe shock, he was disappointed in himself. He felt, for some reason, that he had not managed well, and there was some remorse mingled with his regret. He had not had the courage of his convictions, he had taken the boy on his own responsibility, on his own estimate, and at the first little circumstance he had doubted his own ability to judge the boy's character. For in his heart he was uncertain and fluctuating. At times he thought him innocent, at times guilty. Marc had felt it, and with the just pride of innocence, as well as the fear of being wrongfully punished, had taken himself away beyond the reach

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of reparation, and he, his would-be benefactor, had lost all chance of doing the child justice.

This worried the kind-hearted, sensitive old gentleman not a little, and caused him to be very tender and sympathetic to Seraph in her new sorrow. After he had listened to the child's pathetic story, told with great self-restraint and calmness, he remained in deep thought for a while, as he did not wish to make a mistake by blaming Madame Blumenthal or Cousin Franz. Neither did he wish to undervalue the child's loss. At length he said, with an effort to be cheery:

"*Eh bien, chère petite*, we must admit that your mamma and your cousin are the best judges. They love you, and they can only be right. It's hard for you to give up the violin, and I'm sorry Madame St. Maxent can't hear you play. I'll let her know that you can't play for her to-morrow. It's only putting it off; for if you set your mind at it, you'll make a great artiste on the piano. As a professor of the piano, perhaps you can become more famous than you could as a virtuoso on the violin. Now, *chérie*, set to work with a good heart, and you'll see, you'll see."

"I'll try, Uncle 'Nidas," returned Seraph re-

signedly; "but my fingers feel heavy, and I am lonesome without my violin. And I'm sorry Marc has gone; I miss him. I've nothing—no one to amuse me. Couldn't you lend me Toto? I must have something to pet, and Toto is such a dear."

"Why, certainly, *ma petite*, take Toto; and don't you want some interesting books? I have some just suitable for a little girl,—nice, pleasant stories. And this evening—let me see, we can't have our concert because I haven't a piano, but we'll have a *fête champêtre*. The garden is very pretty now. We'll have some ices and cakes under the multiflora, and you can entertain our little neighbors. I'm sure they know some pretty games, so you won't be dull."

"Thank you, Uncle 'Nidas," Seraph replied, but there was no heartiness in her voice. She held Toto hugged up to her cheek, and Monsieur Nardi thought he saw tears glistening on the little animal's soft fur.

From that day Seraph set about obeying her mother in everything. She practised the piano even more hours than were required of her, and when she was not studying, she tried to teach her little

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fingers to cut and twist the petals of flowers, to
wind the stems, and arrange the bunches artisti-
cally. "I will learn to make flowers, mamma, and
then I can help you earn money," she said, with
womanly gravity. "I have plenty of time when I
am not practising."

"My darling, I would rather have you play
with Toto, and amuse yourself," and Louise looked
anxiously at the child. "You must go in the gar-
den and help Romeo with the flowers. They need
care, and that peach tree at the end of the gallery
has not blossomed yet. I wonder why it is so late.
I've been watching for blossoms on it. When the
peach trees bloom, I know spring has come, and I
feel more cheerful; but this year everything seems
late,—even the birds don't sing as they used to,
and you, Seraph dear, you are losing your spirits.
That won't do; you must cheer up and be my sun-
shine again."

"Oh, mamma, please don't complain of me. I'm
trying so hard to be good, to please you and Cousin
Franz. Why, mamma, Cousin Rachel told you
yesterday, when she was here, that I had improved
so much that I was almost as sedate and thought-
ful as Madge, and she promised me a new frock

as a reward. So, *petite maman*, you must not blame me if I don't sing and laugh as much as I used to do."

After that, for several days, Seraph spent all of her spare time in the little garden. She seemed to be very busy over some new project, and there was a great deal of mysterious whispering with Romeo when he came in to sweep and dust.

One morning, just as the dawn flushed pink in the east, and the objects in the little garden came out clearly one by one, Seraph stole out of her room on to the gallery, holding a small basket full of peach blossoms. Slipping softly down the steps, she tapped at Romeo's door. A low imploring muttering within told that the old man was at his morning's devotions. He was "'ras'lin' with the sperit," as he termed it. The child listened a moment to his gloomy, self-accusing words; he was evidently in the throes of penitence, and his highly colored expressions made her tremble and shrink away: Romeo's religion was not a cheerful emotion. With a saddened heart she turned from the door and sat down on the steps, holding her blossoms, but not looking at them. She seemed to be thinking of something else.

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Presently Romeo hobbled out, his woe-begone old face drawn and haggard in the morning light.

"Bress yer heart, honey, is yer up a'ready an' waitin' fer dat ole step-ladder?"

"Yes, Romeo; I'm waiting, and hurry, please. I want the tree to be in bloom when mamma gets up; then she will be happy all day."

Romeo hobbled away, and bringing the step-ladder, placed it beside the tree. Then Seraph climbed to the very top of it, and, with dextrous, nimble fingers, began tying to the brown branches the pretty pale blossoms, which she had made very naturally from scraps of muslin left from her mother's work.

When the sun peeped into the garden, the little peach tree seemed to blush under its affluence of bloom. And Monsieur Nardi, looking out of his window, thought to himself how suddenly and beautifully the tree had put forth.

An hour later when Madame Blumenthal lifted her tired, dull eyes to the window, she exclaimed joyously, "Look, Seraph, the peach tree is in bloom. How suddenly spring has come!" And a mocking-bird, no wiser than the invalid, dropped down on

a flowering branch and poured out a thrilling song, a song of life and joy, and poor little Louise felt a sudden upspringing of hope and happiness.

But Seraph slipped away to her own little room, and sat there, thinking deeply, with the marmoset hugged to her heart.

OLINISTE.

at a thrilling song,
little Louise felt a
happiness.
her own little room,
with the marmoset

XVIII.

SERAPH'S SECRET.

SERAPH and Madge had seen so little of each other that they were scarcely acquainted, for Madame Arnet had not encouraged any intimacy between the frivolous little violin player and her sedate and obedient daughter.

But now that Seraph had reformed, as it were, under Cousin Franz's excellent advice, and had become studious and submissive, the minister's wife no longer objected to their meeting each other at proper intervals. Occasionally Seraph was invited to tea, or Madge was allowed to spend a few hours in the little cottage on St. Louis Street.

During these short and infrequent meetings the children had, like the busy bee, "improved each shining hour," and made rapid strides toward a close friendship. Seraph had no intimates of her own age, and it was delightful to find in the quiet, gentle little Madge so sympathetic a recipient of her small confidences.

One day they were nestled together in an arbor, in the garden on the Grande Route St. John, chattering as fast as their active little tongues could fly. Madge was unusually animated, and Seraph extremely emphatic.

"If you're sure, Madge," Seraph was saying, "that you can keep a secret, I will tell you; for I *must* tell some one, and I don't dare tell mamma or Uncle 'Nidas, and sometimes I feel so guilty, so wicked, keeping this to myself, and letting another be blamed. I'd like to tell you, Madge. I'd like to ask you what I ought to do, if you're sure you'll never tell."

"I'm not a tell-tale, Seraph. You can trust me," returned Madge firmly.

"On your honor?"

"Yes, on my honor," and she crossed her plump little fingers, binding herself solemnly by that mystic sign.

Then Seraph pressed her soft cheek so close to Madge's fawn-colored head, and whispered so low, that a saucy blue-jay hidden among the vines could not distinguish a word of Seraph's confession; neither a word of Madge's comments.

There were only little half-audible exclamations

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from Seraph of "Oh, do you think so? How can I? Oh, Madge, I can't; I must wait; I can't, I can't," and then some imperative, urgent sentences from Madge. "You must, Seraph, it's right; you must do it. I couldn't rest if I were you. I couldn't sleep at night with *that* on my conscience. You must, Seraph; you must."

"If you think I ought, I'll try," said Seraph, in a faltering, irresolute voice.

"Yes, try. It won't be so hard when you make up your mind. Oh dear! I wonder why it is so easy to do wrong, and so hard to do right," said Madge reflectively. "Seraph, you wouldn't think that I had a secret, would you?"

"No, I wouldn't; have you?" asked Seraph alertly, her eyes sparkling with sudden interest. "Oh, Madge! do tell me! I hope it's not such a dreadful one as mine."

"Well, I don't think I'm doing right," returned Madge honestly. "I am afraid I am deceiving papa and mamma, although they never exactly told me that I shouldn't do it."

"Oh, Madge! do tell me what it is!" cried Seraph anxiously. "I'll cross *my* fingers if you want me to."

"I think you may as well," said Madge cautiously, "then I'll know I'm safe. You see papa intends me to be a professor of German when I grow up. He thinks I like German, but I don't; I hate it." And Madge let her voice fall and looked around nervously at a slight noise.

It was only the curious blue-jay trying to hear what she was saying. "And I don't mean to teach it," she added with calm deliberation. "I have decided to be a milliner. The only thing I *love* to do is to make dolls' hats. I make them for all the girls in school, and mamma doesn't know it. I have no dolls, because papa and mamma think it a foolish waste of time, but I'll tell you how I manage to make the hats. I ask to come out here to study my German. I study awhile, else, you see, I should be telling a falsehood," exclaimed Madge, with careful diplomacy, "and after I have finished my lessons I make my dolls' hats. I will show you," and rising from her seat, she parted the shrubbery and drew forth a small covered basket. "All my things are in this. I hide it here so that no one can find it."

Then she laid out before Seraph's admiring eyes a number of tiny hats made with considerable skill,

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and as modish as though they had come from a milliner's show window.

"They're lovely!" said Seraph, looking at each one approvingly. "Where do you get the ribbon and flowers?"

"The girls give them to me to pay for the hats I make for them, and sometimes I sell one, and, on my way to school, I buy things myself. Now you know *my* secret. I intend to keep on making dolls' hats until I am out of school and am old enough to make big ones. By and by I mean to have a shop on Royal Street, with a large window full of hats, feathers, and flowers," and Madge's light eyes sparkled mildly at its imagined beauty.

"Oh, Madge, I am so glad that you intend to do that," cried Seraph joyfully. "We can have a shop together, and I can make the flowers. I'm learning now from mamma. If I can't play the violin, I mean to make flowers; for I know I shall never love the piano, and you must *love* your instrument to learn to play it well. I mean to try it with all my heart. I promised *petite maman* that I would try; but, Madge, by and by they will see that I can't and then they will leave off making me practice. I'm wearing my finger tips off and straining my

hands for nothing, and Cousin Franz and all of them will find it out by and by."

"Poor Seraph!" said Madge pityingly; "I know how you feel. I feel just the same about German, only *I* don't show it. I've made up my mind to be a milliner, but until the time comes no one but you will know it."

"Yes, we'll keep it a secret," agreed Seraph, "and I'll learn all I can from mamma, and sometime we'll have a big shop like Madame Croizet's, and you and I will sit behind the glass partition,—you making hats, and I making flowers, and *chère petite maman* just looking on and doing nothing; and, Madge, I will buy another violin, and in the evening I will play for you and mamma."

At that moment approaching steps warned the little conspirators. Madge hastened to conceal her basket, and Seraph's small face put on an expression of patient submission which seemed to say, "We bide our time. We are two little clipped, caged birds; we mean to be good and docile now, but our plans for the future are secretly made, and we bide our time to break loose from our prisons and spread our wings in freedom."

That same evening Monsieur Nardi sat alone in

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Nardi sat alone in

his room behind the shop, absorbed in reading a letter. It was from the steward of the ship with whom Marc had sailed as cabin boy, and was in answer to one the old bookseller had despatched to meet the steamer on her arrival in Liverpool.

The steward's letter was another disappointment to Monsieur Nardi. He had asked the kind-hearted sailor to bring the boy back on the return voyage, and to treat him with as much consideration as he possibly could. But to his sorrow, he learned from the letter before him that the steamer was ordered to some other destination, and might not return to New Orleans for years. Besides, Marc, who had made a very satisfactory cabin boy, had left the ship immediately on her arrival, and they had lost all trace of him. But the steward assured Monsieur Nardi that they would do what they could to find the boy, and to induce him to return on the first steamer that sailed for his port.

There the matter ended, and Monsieur Nardi was feeling anything but satisfied with the termination of the affair, when Seraph entered hurriedly and excitedly.

"Oh, Uncle 'Nidas, I've something to tell you," she began breathlessly, as if she had rehearsed a

story and did not wish to be interrupted until she finished it. "I've wanted to tell you for a long time; but I couldn't—I didn't have the courage. To-day Madge made me feel that I ought to tell you, and I must now, while I can. I know why Marc went away. He went because you thought that he had taken some money; but, Uncle 'Nidas, he did not take it. He did not touch it."

"*Mais, comment, ma petite?* How do you know that Marc did not take it?" asked Monsieur Nardi, puzzled, but deeply interested.

"Oh, I can't tell you *how* I know. Oh, please, don't ask me!" she cried, suddenly bursting into tears, and slipping to her knees, she covered her flushed face with her hands, and sobbed. "I am so sorry, so unhappy, but I can't tell you any more!"

For a moment Monsieur Nardi looked at the little figure, kneeling as though in self-abasement, and his eyes were full of bewildered surprise and dismay. Like a flash he remembered that Seraph had entered the room that morning and taken a piece of music she had left the evening before, from that very table. How horrible! What had taken possession of him? Was he losing his mind? Was

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For a moment he hated himself. Then the tenderest
compassion for the cowering, weeping child filled his
troubled old heart. What did it matter? Let her
be ever so guilty, he loved her the same. Stooping
over her he lifted her, and drew her hot, tear-stained
cheek close to his heart.

"There, there, *ma chère*," he said soothingly,
while his own eyes filled. "Not another word;
not another tear. I decided long ago that Marc
was innocent. I know all about it; never speak
of it again; never think of it. It's all over, and
we'll forget it ever happened."

Seraph looked at him searchingly as she wiped
away her tears and swallowed her sobs. Then she
said, in a tone of great relief, "I'm so glad you
know. I didn't think you knew; and you'll for-
give,—I mean you won't punish any one? Oh,
dear Uncle 'Nidas, can't you find Marc to tell him
that you *know* he is innocent?"

"I'm trying to find him, *chérie*; I'm trying, *petite*.
I have thought of a plan, and if that don't succeed,
I shall be obliged to go after him myself."

XIX.

SERAPH'S PROFESSOR.

ONE morning Cousin Franz came to tell Madame Blumenthal that he had engaged for Seraph a professor who had just arrived from Berlin. His name was Vortman, and he was an old friend of Cousin Franz; he had also known Carl Blumenthal when they were boys together in the *conservatoire*. It was a rare chance to find so capable an instructor for such a modest price. As he was a stranger and wished to be introduced, he had made special terms to teach both Madge and Seraph, in the hope of obtaining other pupils through the influence of his former friend.

"Now Seraph has no excuse for not progressing rapidly," said Cousin Franz, when the little preliminaries were arranged; "a professor of such ability will give a new impetus to her efforts and encourage her to strive after real excellence. I have great hopes of her now, since she takes so much interest in her music."

"But does she take interest?" asked Louise doubtfully, "or is she merely trying to be obedient? At times she seems singularly apathetic and indifferent; she is never demonstrative and light-hearted, as she used to be. I sometimes fear that we are training and pruning the slender sapling too severely."

"Not at all, Louise; a little discipline has improved her wonderfully. By and by she will strike out new shoots, and you will be surprised at her vigorous moral and mental growth. Look at Madge; see how carefully I am training her; she has no desires, no will but mine, and she has a fine, healthy mind — no sickly fancies, no whims. She is contented to walk in the path I have marked out for her. I mean to make her a distinguished German scholar; she has the faculty for mastering difficulties, and the patience and perseverance necessary for success. If you will leave Seraph to me, now that I have gained an influence over her, I will make her as reasonable and industrious as Madge is."

"Ah, Cousin Franz, you know so much more than I do! You are full of strength and courage, you have energy and ambition, and I am glad that my child has such a friend and guardian. But let me beg of you not to be too severe, not to expect

too much of Seraph. She is delicate and sensitive, and lately she has not seemed strong. Her little pale face and sad resigned eyes torture me, and sometimes I long to have her her old, restless, noisy, impulsive self again. If we should ruin her health, and make her miserable—ah, I shudder to think of it.”

“Then don’t think of it. Those are nervous fancies. She will develop into a fine, strong woman, and under Vortman’s instruction will make a pianiste to be proud of.”

Any change in the dull, gray level of Seraph’s daily life was most welcome. Gradually, in her strained, overwrought condition, everything was becoming colorless, cold, and uninteresting to her. She struggled through her allotted tasks in a dull, lifeless way. She mastered the technicalities of her lessons, she practised carefully and correctly, she went through her exercises like a clever little machine, with no more human feeling in her touch than one could detect in a music-box.

Before Professor Vortman had given her a half-dozen lessons, he was impressed with the child’s technical skill. Her time, her fingering, her phrasing, were remarkably correct, but the lack of expres-

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sion and warmth exasperated him. He was a clever, kind-hearted man, as well as an artist, and he began to study his little pupil closely, until it grew upon him that she was like some small creature out of its element struggling to adapt itself to new conditions. It was like trying to teach a fish to fly, or a bird to swim. Nature was against him, and he could not conquer its immutable laws. The child's soul was not in her work, she was not an intelligence; she was a mere machine grinding out her pitiful pathetic task.

"Is it possible," thought Professor Vortman to himself, "that honest, intelligent human beings such as Franz Arnet and that gentle little invalid can have no more perception, or have they wooden hearts, not to be able to feel that they are inflicting torture on that poor, impressionable child? Well, I will tell them the truth. I will not be an accomplice."

During a lesson, preparatory to an interview with Cousin Franz, Professor Vortman asked Seraph some simple, practical questions.

"Do you love music, mademoiselle?"

"Yes, monsieur, I love music; but I dislike the piano."

"Why, then, if you dislike the piano, do you study it?"

"Because Cousin Franz and mamma wish me to."

"Why do you dislike the piano, my child?"

"I don't know, monsieur; I can't explain."

"Ah, mademoiselle, that is not reasonable. Give me a reason, please."

"Well, monsieur, I love the violin; perhaps that is why I dislike the piano."

"I understand. The violin is your instrument. Do you not know that it is wasting time to study an instrument you dislike?"

"Yes, monsieur, I know it, but Cousin Franz and mamma do not."

"Have you a violin?"

"No, monsieur, I have none; I had papa's, but Cousin Franz thought best to sell it."

"And you practised a great deal on it?"

"Oh, yes; every day; and I was always happy when I had my violin."

"Yes, yes; I understand," and the professor went away, thinking deeply.

The next day Professor Vortman brought his violin. The violin was his favorite instrument also,

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and handing Seraph a roll of music, he said, "See if here is something you can play."

She selected a sonata, and went through it in a manner that astonished the professor.

"Very good! excellent! My little friend, let me congratulate you. I have found your soul—it is in the violin."

"Thank you, monsieur," said Seraph, tears starting to her eyes, and her face warm and tremulous with emotion. "I know it; but I can't convince Cousin Franz and mamma."

"See here, my good friend," cried Professor Vortman, entering Cousin Franz's study rather abruptly, "I thought you had some sensibility, some conscience. See what a task you have set me to do. You expect me to teach a bird to burrow like a mole, a butterfly to creep like a snail. You expect me to change nature itself, and I decline to try it; I'll have nothing to do with such cruelty."

"Why, Vortman, what do you mean?" asked Cousin Franz, turning quickly in his chair, and looking at the professor, surprised and alarmed.

"Oh, yes, my learned doctor, my good honest friend. You are wise in your own conceit, but in

reality you are as ignorant and blind as an earth-worm."

"What have I done? Prove what you assert," exclaimed Cousin Franz, with a troubled expression.

"Ah, you may as well plead guilty," and Professor Vortman's sarcastic face relaxed in a grim smile. "You have tried to fetter a little soul; you have tried to force genius to express itself by your methods, in your way. You have tried to do what the Creator alone can do. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and the Supreme cannot be bound by any laws or devices of man. Stop persecuting that adorable little *protégé* of yours. Take her away from the piano. She will never bring out one chord of true music from that instrument. Allow her to express herself in her own way, and you, and perhaps the world, will be astonished at her power, her passion, her genius."

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XX.

A DILEMMA.

MOST unexpectedly Cousin Franz was faced by a very trying dilemma. He hated extremely to acknowledge himself in the wrong; to admit that he had been mistaken in his pet theories of rearing and training the young, that after all his secret self-laudation he lacked discernment and intelligence; and, on the other hand, he had too much respect for Professor Vortman's honesty and ability to discredit his decision; besides, he did not wish to bestow a charity that was of no benefit to the recipient. In short, he did not wish to pay for lessons that would be of no future good to Seraph.

After thinking the matter over seriously, and looking at it from every point of view, he had a long interview with Louise and the professor, during which he tried to fortify his position by former arguments; but at length, fearing that Professor Vortman would resign his position as instructor,

he yielded with as good a grace as possible, and decided, with the consent of her mother, to leave Seraph's musical education entirely to the discretion of the professor, to be conducted by him exactly as it suited his intelligence and his pupil's ability.

"But she has no violin," said Louise regretfully.

"I am so sorry it was necessary to sell Carl's."

"It *was* necessary," returned Cousin Franz decidedly, "and a very wise and reasonable proceeding. It was altogether too valuable an instrument for a child to practise on. A cheaper one will do as well."

"Ah, but I have not the means to get her a cheaper one."

Professor Vortman's interest in his pupil smoothed away even that obstacle. "Mademoiselle can use mine until she obtains one of her own," he said.

As soon as Seraph heard the favorable result of the special conference, she flew to Monsieur Nardi to impart the good news.

"Oh, Uncle 'Nidas," she cried joyfully; again she was all animation and energy. "Cousin Franz and mamma have listened to Professor Vortman, and I am to take up the violin again."

"*Bien, tres bien, ma chère petite amie!* I am happy

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for you. You have been so good and patient. Now see the reward."

"*Mais, cher oncle,*" and the happy little face clouded for a moment, "how can I play without papa's violin? Another will not seem the same."

"*Vrai, vrai, chérie;* but you must try to get used to another. There are some fine violins for sale here in the shops, although they are not genuine Guarnerii, as your father's was."

"Yes, Uncle 'Nidas, I know there are good ones. There is one I like in a little shop on Rue Royale. I have been there often to look at it, and Madame *la marchande* has let me play on it, and she says the bow is a *vrai Tourte de Paris*. You know they are the best. One must have a good bow as well as a good violin; but, *cher oncle*, I can't have that one. Mamma is not rich enough to buy it for me. I can only use Professor Vortman's, and I can never love a borrowed violin."

"*Bah, bah, petite!* why not? You love a borrowed marmoset; *n'est ce pas?*"

"Ah, but Toto isn't the same as a violin. I love Toto dearly, I like to borrow him, and I forget that he is not mine; but a violin, ah! that is not a

marmoset. You see I couldn't love a borrowed mamma as well as I love my own. 'That is the way I feel about a violin.'

"Yes, yes, I understand you; yes, I understand." Then a sudden radiance shone over Monsieur Nardi's plain, old face and he laughed merrily, "*Oui, oui, pauvre petite; oui, je comprends.*"

"I am glad if *you* understand me, Uncle 'Nidas. Mamma says she doesn't, and that I am foolish to feel so about a violin; but I do, and I can't help it."

"Well, *ma petite*, do you think I could convince your mamma that you should have an instrument of your own? Suppose I call on her. Suppose you run and ask her if she will receive me this evening at any hour she likes."

"I know she will; I know she'll be glad to see you, dear Uncle 'Nidas, although she never sees any one but our cousins, because she is lame and obliged to remain in her chair all day; but I know she will see you. I'll run and ask her."

And Seraph ran out as swift-footed as a gazelle, her eyes shining, and her face full of joyous life. In a few moments she returned, radiant and breathless.

"Yes, yes, *cher oncle*; mamma says she will be *happy* to see you. And she meant it; for her pale, sick face

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was bright all over. She wants to thank you for being so good to us. Professor Vortman will leave his violin, and I will play you a new *fantaisie* he brought me, and—and we shall be happy again. Only poor Marc will not be here; I wish he would come back now that you know—" and her voice fell to a whisper. She felt that there was a grave secret between her and her old friend which must be respected.

"Yes, my child, I wish he would come back; I shan't be quite at ease until he does. I am trying to induce the men on the English ships to search for him when they return to Liverpool, by offering them a reward to bring him back. Patsy is as much interested as I am, and he is doing all he can. I think we shall see Marc again. I think he will return, when he knows how much I wish it."

"Then we will forget how unhappy we have been since he went away, and everything will be just as it was, won't it?" she asked, a little anxiously.

"Certainly, *chérie*, certainly; all will be the same."

"*A la bonne heure!* Now I must go and practise; I am *folle* with joy. No more piano, no more jangling over hard keys. Look at my fingers, *cher oncle*;

they are alive now, all alive. You shall hear what music I can make. Good by till evening."

And she ran off with such a merry laugh that it warmed the heart of the old bookseller, who stood looking after her with a puzzled expression. "Dear me; how annoying!" he thought. "I don't want to think of it, and yet I do. I wish I could get at the bottom of that wretched little affair. There's something I haven't found out yet. I am convinced that Marc is innocent; but *who* is guilty?"

Monsieur Nardi's visit to Madame Blumenthal was extremely satisfactory. The invalid, with her soft, curling hair prettily arranged, and in her daintiest white *robe de chambre*, looked charmingly expectant, as she gave her hand to her visitor's kindly grasp. For a moment the old bookseller seemed embarrassed and ill at ease. Something in the faded, childish face before him brought back a flood of memories,—memories that always made him oblivious to time and place,—and he found it rather difficult to recover himself and confine his wandering thoughts to the necessities of the occasion.

Gratitude and thanks always made him a little awkward and confused; and poor Louise, her heart full to overflowing, was profuse in her expressions

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of indebtedness. During this little war of words,— protestations on her part, and modest denials on his,—his momentary embarrassment passed un- noticed, and very soon he regained his composure, and they were chatting together as informally and intimately as though they had been life-long friends.

Seraph slipped out of the room to play over her new *fantaisie* before Monsieur Nardi heard it; and while she was gone there was a conference not intended for her ears between the visitor and her mother. When she returned with her violin, the conversation changed abruptly to another subject, and something like this was said by Louise, whose face was flushed with emotion:

"Have you noticed the peculiarity of that peach tree in my little garden? The blossoms have faded and withered, but they have not fallen, and strange to say, although it bloomed so profusely, a leaf has never appeared."

Monsieur Nardi's eyes twinkled, and he looked at Seraph as he said, "I think this little fairy can explain the mystery of the peach tree; I discovered it some time ago."

"Oh, *petite maman*, didn't you know that they weren't real blossoms?" cried Seraph. "Didn't you

know that I made them out of your scraps of muslin and silk, and tied them on? I thought you found it out long ago, and only wanted *me* to think you didn't know. Dear little mamma, see how I cheated you into being happy!"

Louise laughed heartily, and, stroking the pretty hair fondly, said, "*Oh, ma chère*, what a little trickster you are!"

Then Seraph played exquisitely, and Monsieur Nardi listened like one in a happy dream. He was dangerously near those old delightful days, and again he felt as though he had united the threads of his life just where they were rudely broken nearly forty years before.

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XXI.

SERAPH'S FÊTE.

EACH day Professor Vortman was more and more astonished at Seraph's progress on the violin. As a plant which shoots more vigorously after its growth has been checked, the child's talent seemed to spring out anew with fresh living power, —an abandon, a fervor, a strength, that enchanted the artistic feeling of her teacher. He did not now complain of apathy and dulness; her heart and soul were in her work, and there was danger of her giving too much vitality to her studies, instead of too little.

There was only one small discord that marred the harmony of her otherwise perfect happiness, and that was the professor's violin. It was a German instrument, and Seraph did not find it as responsive to her touch as the deeper, richer, more resonant Guarnieri upon which she had always played. Her father's violin was the lost chord in the melody of her life. Until she found it again, she felt that she could never quite satisfy herself.

The violin she liked best after her father's was the old one in the little shop on the Rue Royale. Often she went there, and Madame would take it out of its case and hand it to Seraph as tenderly as though it were an infant. The mistress of the shop had become deeply interested in the pretty, well-bred child, who handled the instrument so carefully, almost reverently, examining it with the greatest interest, and remarking on its fine points with the accuracy and intelligence of a *connoisseur*.

Sometimes, when the door was closed, and there was no one in the shop but the mistress, Seraph would take the fine Tourte bow and draw such delicious strains from the old violin that Madame would forget her numerous affairs to listen spell-bound to the wonderful little musician.

"Ah, mademoiselle," she would say, "I wish you could have that instrument. It's a genuine Cremona; I don't pretend that it's an Amati or a Stradivari, or any of those great names; but it's a good one."

"Yes," Seraph would reply a little sadly. "It's a good one. The best I ever played on, except one, and that I shall never play on again. My

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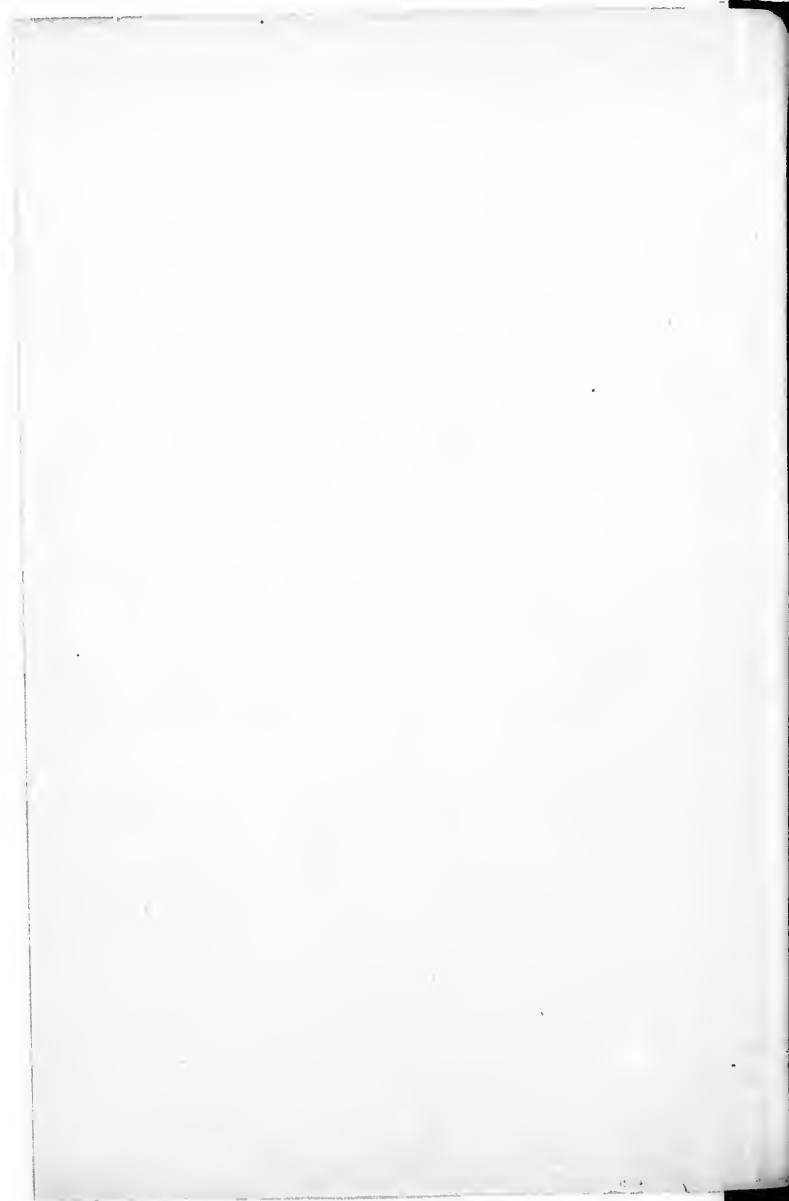
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professor's violin is very good, but it's not like this. Yes, I wish I could have this, but it's no use to wish. I'm sure I can't. You are very kind, madame, to let me play on it, and I only hope you won't sell it," added Seraph, with more candor than tact.

Madame smiled, and said pleasantly, "Ah, you don't mean that, mademoiselle. I am very anxious to find a customer. I've had this a long time. I paid a good price for it, so you see my money's lying idle. Rich, fashionable people don't come to my little shop when they want an instrument. It's only those who haven't much money, and they want something new and cheap. I'd like to sell it, but I'd like to sell it to you."

After a while Seraph grew so fond of the Cremona that when she had a spare half-hour she ran to the shop on the Rue Royale for the pleasure of playing on it. One day when she entered, Madame met her at the door with an expression of mingled satisfaction and regret. "*Ah, ma pauvre petite mademoiselle*, I've unpleasant news for you, although I am very much pleased for myself. At last I have sold the Cremona."

"Oh, madame! Have you? Is it gone?" and

the sharp note of sorrow in Seraph's voice showed how deeply she felt its loss.

"Yes, *ma chère*, it is gone. I closed the bargain two days ago. It had to be cleaned and put in order before my customer took it. Oh, it was beautiful in a brand-new case. I got a good price for it, so I threw in the case. A fine rosewood lined with blue velvet. I wish you could have seen it. The dear violin looked so rich in such an elegant case."

Seraph stood silent for a moment, her little face full of keen disappointment. While it was there, she felt somewhat as though it belonged to her, but now she could have no part nor lot with it in its prosperity of a new owner and a velvet-lined case. It was gone, and she must not even say that she was sorry. At length she said, a little reluctantly, however, "Well, madame, I'm glad you have found a customer, but — but I'm sorry it's not here. I'm sorry I can't play on it again."

"So am I, *chère petite*. I never heard a little girl play so beautifully, and I know I shall never hear another. Unfortunately I was obliged to let it go. I needed money, *voilà tout*; but I shall often be longing to hear you again."

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After this interchange of gentle amenities Seraph went away dejectedly, and tried to forget her new loss by vigorously attacking the professor's rather strident instrument, from which she drew such wildly rebellious strains, that poor little Louise was obliged to cover her ears in order to shut out the discordant notes, which always tortured her weak nerves.

It was Seraph's birthday. She was twelve years old, and Monsieur Nardi had prepared a little fête for her. It was to be held in his garden, and it was to be what he laughingly called a musical *fête champêtre*. A dozen or so of his small neighbors were there, and as it was given in Seraph's honor, Madame Arnet had allowed Madge to join the little party. Under a large fig tree was arranged a platform, and before it were placed a number of chairs for the small audience. Romeo had not forgotten any of the details of the former open-air concerts, so he had provided a basket of flowers to shower upon the little violiniste. And Cressy had arranged a table in the multiflora arbor, on which were fruits, cakes, and bon-bons of every variety, as well as the pretty gifts of each little visitor.

Seraph was unusually happy, for it was the first

time that her mother had consented to leave the retirement of her room. Monsieur Nardi had requested it as a particular favor; and there she sat in her wheel-chair in the midst of the merry group, looking very pretty and delicate, in a dainty white gown, with a tiny flower-bonnet resting on her curly hair. Her stained fingers were covered with pearl-gray gloves, and she shaded her tired eyes with a rose-colored parasol, a remnant of her happy girlhood.

Seraph had seen her mother dressed in that way before her father had been taken from them. The invalid often went out then in her wheel-chair in spite of her lameness, and she remembered how proud and happy she had been walking beside her pretty, dainty, little mother, while her father pushed the chair always talking and laughing in his merry, light-hearted fashion.

At last, when the preparations were complete, and Seraph was ready to play, Cousin Franz and Professor Vortman came through the shop into the garden quite as if by accident, and then the satisfaction of the little violiniste was perfect. She had secretly wished that Cousin Franz and her teacher could hear her at her best, and she felt in the mood to surprise them.

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When the curtain which Monsieur Nardi had so cleverly arranged with Romeo's assistance was drawn aside, the child made a charming picture. She stood in a bower of green leaves and blossoms, while the dark foliage of the fig-tree made an effective background for her lovely face, beaming eyes, and shining golden hair. On this occasion she wore, instead of her masquerade costume, a simple white frock, confined at the waist by a soft silk sash.

Her surroundings were so harmonious, so perfect, that there was scarcely room for one desire. Yet there was *one*, and it was the wish for her father's violin. But she was so excited, so elated, that she did not allow that one regret to disconcert her. She played her best, her very best, and perhaps it is not too much praise to say that Professor Vortman's violin never emitted more delicious strains.

When she had finished her first sonata there was a burst of applause, amid which could be distinctly heard the rattling of Romeo's bony fingers. Then such a shower of blossoms! They fell around her thicker than leaves in Vallombrosa. And as she stooped to gather them, she saw Madge before her holding up a mound of flowers, out of all proportion

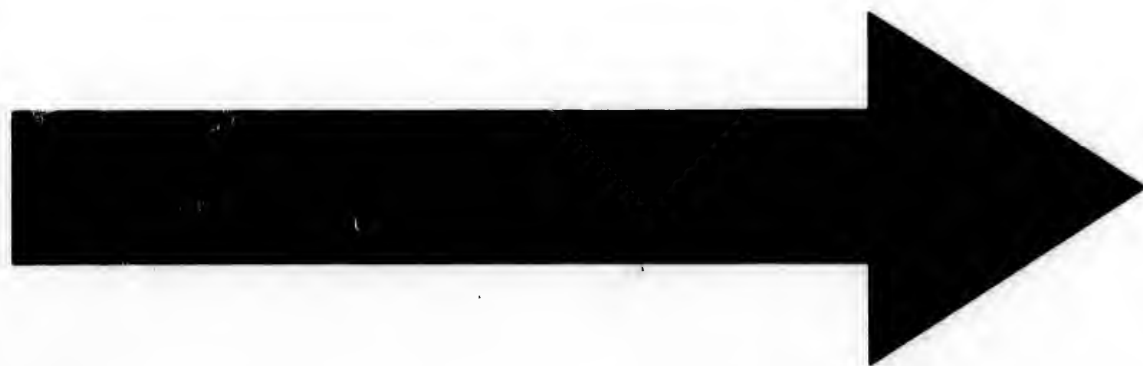
to the small hands that grasped it. But there was something under the flowers, — a case, a violin case. Among the flowers lay a card on which was written "*À la charmante petite violiniste, avec le dévouement de l'Oncle 'Nidas.'*"

With trembling fingers Seraph opened the case, and there, on its blue velvet lining, lay the Cremona violin from the shop on the Rue Royale.

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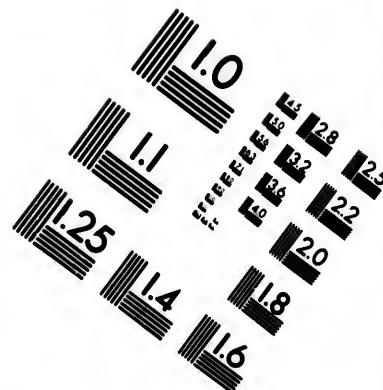
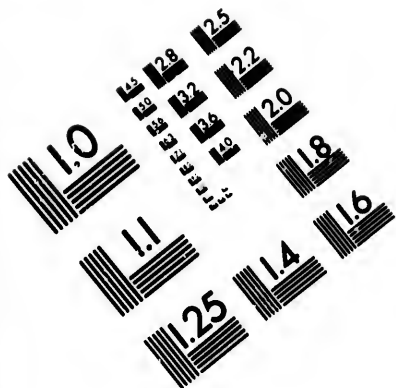
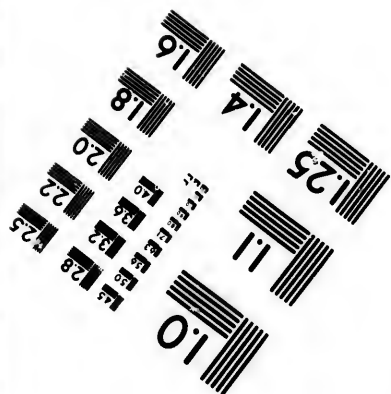
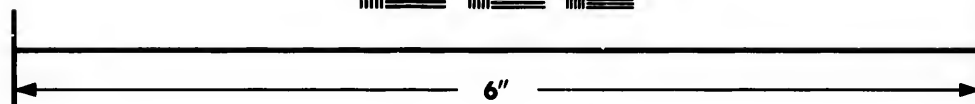
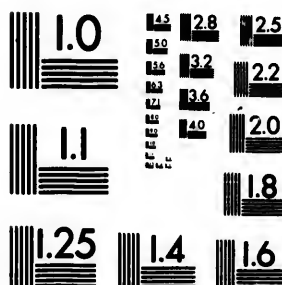


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XXII.

A DOUBLE SUCCESS.

SO astonished and delighted was Seraph by the present of the much-desired violin that she did not notice a sudden and important addition to her audience,—a handsome, richly gowned woman and a fine-looking boy of about sixteen. They were distinguished guests, but their manner was very simple and unaffected. They shook hands cordially with Monsieur Nardi, who presented them to Madame Blumenthal, Cousin Franz, and Professor Vortman.

The new arrivals were Madame St. Maxent and her son Maurice, and they had not dropped in by accident. Monsieur Nardi had planned the little fête expressly to give his friends an opportunity of hearing Seraph at her best, and the success he desired was doubtless secured, for they had entered at a moment when the child looked simply angelic, as she stood in her pretty bower, holding the violin in her arms, her face a study of varying emotions. Gratitude, joy, and triumph beamed from her eyes, while her lips curved in a smile of rapture.

Madame St. Maxent and Maurice declared that they had never seen a prettier little tableau.

"But please wait, madame, until you hear her play," said Monsieur Nardi, his homely old face beaming with satisfaction. "It is true that she is a lovely child, but her playing! Ah, it is heavenly!"

While Monsieur Nardi was talking with his guests, Professor Vortman was assisting Seraph to tune the Cremona. "What shall I play?" she whispered, for she had discovered the new arrivals, and for a moment was a little embarrassed.

"Repeat the same sonata," he replied. "Play it as well as you played it before, and I shall be satisfied."

"But I must thank dear Uncle 'Nidas for the Cremona."

"Thank him by your playing. Do your best for his friends; that will show your gratitude, *ma chère*; that will please him more than words."

When the Cremona was perfectly accorded, and the music arranged, Professor Vortman went back to his seat, and Seraph made her graceful bow to her audience, and began her score with the composure of one who had passed her life in public.

So absorbed was she with the new instrument, with

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the incomparable strains evoked by the Tourte bow,
and the rich resonant tones of the Cremona, that
she was for the time oblivious to her surroundings;
and as she bent her inspired little face over the
instrument, she seemed to impart some of her own
fresh young life to the inanimate wood. She and
the violin seemed to breathe and throb together
with the vigor and passion, as well as the delicacy
and tenderness, of one of Bach's most beautiful
sonatas.

It was really a remarkable performance for a
child; and when the last lingering, liquid strain died
into silence, there was a storm of heartfelt applause
and another shower of blossoms, and Seraph stepped
from her small bower unutterably happy and radi-
antly triumphant.

In a moment she was surrounded by her audi-
ence. Madame St. Maxent drew her to her and
kissed her warmly, and Maurice congratulated her
in a simple, boyish fashion. Every note had gone
straight to his heart, but he could not express what
he felt. He loved the violin as well as Seraph did,
but, as his mother had remarked to Monsieur Nardi,
he lacked the touch, the divine touch, which he
recognized in the child's playing.

Even Cousin Franz was obliged to acknowledge that Seraph had a special gift, and to admit to the professor that he had done well with his little pupil.

As soon as Seraph could leave the distinguished visitors, she flew to her mother, and embracing her warmly, whispered, "*Oh, chère maman*, how can I thank Uncle 'Nidas? My heart is so full that I am afraid I shall cry if I try to tell him how happy I am."

"Don't try to tell him now, *chérie*. Wait until you are calmer; he knows how grateful you are. Look at his face, my child; he is as happy as you are."

Louise was right. He was perfectly satisfied with the result of his little entertainment, for he had not only interested Madame St. Maxent in his *protégée*, but he had enlisted her sympathy for the invalid mother as well.

The kind-hearted *élégante* had drawn a chair close to Louise, and after heartily congratulating her on the success of the little violiniste, with a gentle and friendly interest led the invalid to speak of herself.

"Is it possible that you are unable to walk?" she asked.

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"I have not walked for nearly twelve years," replied Louise piteously.

"How unfortunate! Then you go out very little?"

"Almost never. To-day I have made an effort for my child. It is so near, and Monsieur Nardi is such a good friend, I could not refuse him; but I am accustomed to my imprisonment," added Louise resignedly; "I seldom wish to go out."

"You must let me make you wish to go. You must allow me to come and take you and that lovely child to drive."

"Oh, how kind!" murmured Louise. "Thank you; you are too good."

"Yes, to myself," returned Madame St. Maxent, laughing. "Ask my old friend; he will tell you that I must always have some life about me. As I have no children,—for Maurice is no longer a child,—I take my dogs to drive, and you must admit that you and your charming child will be pleasanter companions than those troublesome little animals."

"It is very considerate of you to put it in that way," returned Louise, with a grateful smile. "Seraph might amuse you, but I am very dull; I shrink a little from seeing people. I am nervous and shy."

"Oh, we will go where it is very quiet; to the

lake, to some of the parks. You must give me the pleasure of trying to make your life a little brighter. You must get well for the sake of that clever child. I can assure you she has a brilliant future before her, and she will need you to steer her safely amid the shoals and quicksands of life."

Louise's eyes filled with tears. "Yes, for my child's sake I wish to be strong."

"Well, we will see what we can do to help you. I am greatly interested in your fascinating little daughter, and I should like to have the honor of helping to launch her. I hope you will allow her to visit me often. My son will enjoy playing duets with her. He is as enthusiastic about her as I am. I must ask Monsieur Nardi to bring her to me, and that excellent professor also. A very interesting man, and I am sure a superior instructor. I must engage him for Maurice."

Without intending it, Monsieur Nardi had, by the means of his little fête, not only launched Seraph, but he had given Professor Vortinan a vigorous push in the direction of success. To be the instructor of Maurice St. Maxent was a recommendation that would open to him the doors of the rich and fashionable.

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After the guests of honor had partaken of Cressy's little feast, served by the dignified and delighted Romeo, they withdrew as quietly as they had entered, and the children were left to enjoy themselves in their own way.

Although Monsieur Nardi had anticipated great good from bringing Madame St. Maxent and Seraph together, he had not expected his endeavors to be crowned with such pleasant and important results; for he did not foresee that the gay woman of the world would interest herself in the poor little invalid by offering to try to make her life brighter and happier; therefore his little fête was a double success, especially when the desired patronage and favor extended even to Professor Vortman.

XXIII.

A NEW LIFE.

WHEN Cousin Franz returned home and told Madame Arnet of Seraph's success, the good lady was quite animated over the reflected honor.

"Really, Mr. Arnet, how very flattering to Seraph; but I'm not surprised at her playing well. Of course she can play the violin. It comes natural to her. It seems to me that she doesn't deserve any special praise for playing the violin. She was *born* with a gift for it, but I am surprised that Madame St. Maxent should go there to hear her, and that she should think so much of her playing. I suppose she didn't notice Madge. Now, as I look at it, Madge should be commended for playing on the piano as well as she does when she has no natural taste for it."

"But Madge didn't play on the piano; no one played the piano, Rachel. I am speaking of Seraph's playing the violin. Her playing was remarkable."

"Yes, Mr. Arnet, yes, I understood what you

said; but if Madge had played I mean — I think Madame St. Maxent would have been pleased with her progress — considering she has no gift," returned Madame Arnet, floundering hopelessly in her effort to make herself understood.

"Nonsense, Rachel," said Cousin Franz impatiently. "Madge is a good German scholar, but she can't play the piano. This affair of Seraph has opened my eyes to some rather serious truths in regard to the education of children. I see now that I was wrong in trying to force Seraph to study the piano. She would have met with no success in that direction, but with her talent for the violin, and Madame St. Maxent's patronage, she will make a reputation. Professor Vortman says she is the most promising pupil that he ever had. He predicts great things for her. He wishes her to study with him for a couple of years, and then, he says, she must go to the Paris Conservatoire. But that, I fear, will be impossible. I am very anxious about Louise's affairs. When the money that I got for the violin is gone, she will be in a very trying position."

"And she surely can't expect you to support her," said Madame Arnet sharply. "She knows

that your salary is small, that our church is poor, and she has no claims on me."

"No, certainly, Rachel, she has no claims on you; but she has on her husband's cousin, and I shall do the best I can, trusting in a kind Father to help me."

"Oh! I would not worry about her, Mr. Arnet. It's likely Madame St. Maxent will do something for her, if she is interested in Seraph. She ought to. The rich ought to help the poor." And the minister's wife, after this wise conclusion, settled down comfortably to her needle-work.

Madame Arnet was not wrong in her prediction. Madame St. Maxent did help Louise in many ways. First, and most important, she encouraged her to hope, for with hope as a support even the most feeble and helpless can struggle against cruel difficulties. The poor invalid had lived only from day to day, shuddering when she thought of the months and years before her. She was tired of life, weary of constant and ill-paid labor, and disgusted with her cramped, narrow environment, but she could not ask nor hope for freedom while she had her child. She must live for her, she must bear her burden as she best could, in patient and uncomplaining endurance.

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When Madame St. Maxent first visited Louise, seeing her at her dainty and difficult labor, and learning how little she received for it, she decided to find customers for the invalid who would pay her in proportion to the perfection of her work.

"My little friend," she said, "we will change all this. Croizet is a wretch, and I will never buy another flower from her. You shall sell your flowers yourself. You shall take your own orders. I will send my friends to you. Finish what you have on hand and send them to that wicked woman, with every scrap of material that belongs to her."

"But, dear madame, if I offend her, she will never employ me again," said Louise tremulously.

"*N'importe*; you won't need her work; very soon you will build up a patronage for yourself."

"And the material? I have not the means to purchase it."

"I will attend to that. Give me a list of all you need, and I can give you an order at once. Make a half-dozen of those beautiful flower-bonnets, such as you wore the other day at Monsieur Nardi's little fête; vary the flowers, and I can dispose of them all among my friends for twenty dollars each.

They are very fashionable, and Croizet asks from twenty-five to thirty dollars for them."

"And she pays me about five dollars for one," sighed Louise.

"Then there are roses for the carnival. I will take it upon myself to order them from you. They will not be needed for some time, but you can begin them, and work on them at your leisure. In the meantime I will send a young friend, who is to be married soon, to you for her bridal *parure*, and you must allow me to fix the prices. You are too modest, you underestimate your talent, and charge too little. You must be paid the same as that dishonest Croizet, who has been getting rich off your work."

Madame St. Maxent was as good as her word. Very soon customers poured in, and Louise had all the orders she could fill. Even Seraph's little fingers were kept busy when she was not practising on the violin. She was delighted to assist her mother, and displayed a great deal of taste for the pretty work. The mother and child made a charming picture, bending over the table covered with flowers of adorable tints,—Seraph, bright, joyous, and full of animation, her busy fingers fluttering

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among the blossoms while she chattered merrily;
Louise, pale and serious, listening with calm content,
and both as happy as heart could wish.

And their days were not *all* labor. Often Ma-
dame St. Maxent came and took them out in her
carriage, cheerfully quoting the old adage about
"all work and no play." These were gala days
for Seraph and her mother; no matter how busy
they were, their active friend would listen to no
excuses. It was part of her plan for their happi-
ness, and she would not be thwarted. Everything
was laid aside, toilets were hastily made, and Louise
was wheeled out to the carriage by Romeo, and lifted
in by the strong coachman, often assisted by Mon-
sieur Nardi, while Fifine, Nanette, and the other
children looked on in silent admiration.

The glossy horses would stamp a little, and
champ their bits impatiently. Monkey would give
a series of joyous barks from the shop door, and
the carriage would roll off, accompanied by Maurice,
clattering after them on his spirited pony, and
Seraph, from the front seat, would wave her hand
to Uncle 'Nidas, who stood watching them, with
a beaming face, until they turned swiftly into Rue
Royale.

In the spring they often drove out by the beautiful Bayou St. John, and as they neared the lake, came upon the wide stretch of low land where the *fleur-de-lis* blooms so luxuriantly, carpeting for miles, with shimmering white, amethyst, blue, and pale rose, both sides of the slender, sinuous bayou.

To the invalid, who had lived so long within the narrow bounds of four walls, this vast expanse, this wide stretch of softly blended color, harmonizing so perfectly with the blue of the lake, the dark outlines of the old Spanish fort, and the masses of gray-green foliage clearly defined against the saffron and rose of the sky, made an enchanting picture, which lingered in her memory, and haunted her with its beauty, even after she had entered into the silence and solitude of her dull little room.

It was indeed a new world, and a new life, that Madame St. Maxent's generosity and thoughtful kindness had opened up to her. And each day she grew stronger, more hopeful, and better equipped for the battle of life.

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XXIV.

ROMEO'S CONFESSION.

STEAMER after steamer arrived from Liverpool, and Monsieur Nardi heard nothing of Marc, although Patsy had interviewed all the sailors, and informed every one connected with the numerous ships of the liberal reward offered by the old book-seller to any one who would induce the boy to return.

Every few days Patsy would enter the bookshop, hat in hand, his hair noticeably sleek, and his face newly shaven, and about the same dialogue would ensue.

"Good mornin', sir; another steamer at the levee, sir."

"Ah! any news?"

"No news, sir."

"Do you think they are trying to find him?"

"Sure, sir; that reward would fetch 'em."

"It seems as though they might find some trace of him."

"Yes, sir, it seems so, but I reckon you might as well look for a needle in a haystack, as to look for a little shaver like that among all them people on them Liverpool docks, sir."

"Yes, I know, Patsy; but I hoped the boy might board some of the ships to ask for news from home."

"Poor little chap! I guess he don't mean to have anything to do with us. He went away proud and hurt like. Seein' he was innocent, he felt as though it wasn't just, an' he had principles, that little kid had."

"I know it, oh, I know it!" almost groaned Monsieur Nardi, "and that is why I am so anxious to get him back. He thinks I wronged him, and, poor child! I wouldn't harm a hair of his head."

"Well, we won't give up, sir. While there's a ray of hopes, I'm agoin' on enquirin' an' keepin' the interest alive. I'm gettin' to be a pest to them sailors, sir, with my everlastin' questions, an' advice as how to find him. If I was over there, I'd light on him right off. Somethin' would tell me where the little kid was. I never knowed how near that boy was till he was gone."

"Nor I, either, Patsy," returned Monsieur Nardi

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dejectedly. "I can't give him up. I can't be contented until I see him again."

"I guess, sir, if the little chap knowed how much we wanted him back, he'd come jest to oblige us. Well, good mornin', sir. They say there's another steamer below the bend, an' I must be on the levee when she gets up. Who knows, sir, who knows, but he'll be on this one? Good mornin', sir,—I must hurry,—good mornin'." And Patsy would step off as briskly as his stiff old legs would allow.

About this time, Romeo was taken ill, and lay all day moaning and groaning in his little room; and Madame Blumenthal was obliged to have the woman who washed her linen and did other odd work, to come in and take his place. From the first of his illness, Cressy had been very attentive, and Seraph had devoted herself to him in a way that showed her affection for the faithful old servant.

"That ole man's mighty porely," said Lisa, the negress who had taken his place. "An' it seems ter me, mam'selle, that it's his pore mine what's troubled. He ain't got no partikler misery in his body; he's jes' ole an' wore out, an' somefin' is a-pressin' on his mine, an' he can't sleep an' eat."

"Cressy says he has fever," said Seraph, with a startled look. "Trouble on his mind wouldn't give him fever, would it?"

"Suttenly, mam'selle, — the hottes' kine of fever. I knowed a lil' gal what took a dime from her ma. It was this a way. Her ma sont her to market for a *grillade*, an' she bought ginger cake 'stead o' the *grillade*, an' et it, an' tole her ma how she done los' the dime, an' that same night she was took with misery in her stomach, an' the hottes' kine o' fever."

"Perhaps she ate too much ginger cake," suggested Seraph.

"Oh no! Shorely a dime o' ginger cake wouldn't give no colored chile misery in the stomach, much lessen fever; 'twas jes' her conshuns what hurted her, an' she was bad off when Deacon Spotts cum ter pray wid her; an' she up an' 'fessed an' got well right off."

"Did she — did she get well right away?" asked Seraph, with sudden interest.

"Suttenly, mam'selle, she shorely did; that same night she was able to set up an' eat poke an' greens."

Seraph walked away to the shed room, in deep

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thought. At the door she lingered, listening. Romeo was moaning and muttering to himself.

"Oh Lor', have mussy on my pore ole soul! Oh, I is sich a sinner! I is wusser dan der tief on der cross. But, good Lor', can't yer have mussy on me jes' es yer done on dat tief. Oh, I's sinned wusser dan Judas 'Scariot, an' I a 'fessin' Christian. I's 'nied my Lor', an' I can't get no peace. I's bin a ras'lin' wid der sperrit, ever sence I done dat deed, an' I can't git no peace. But Lor', dear, good Lor', *yer* knowed how I was tempted; yer knowed how turruble I was tempted. I couldn't see dat pore chile what Mas' Carl lef' in my care jes' a dyin' fer dat bottle o' Jew-crow. Oh Lor', I couldn't 'sist dat temptation when I was in sich straits. Yer knowed, good Lor', dat it wasn't fer me,—dis pore ole nigger doesn't mine goin' hongry an' cole if dem chil'ren is jes' comf'able. I wouldn't a done it only fer Miss Louise. Pore chile, she was pale an' weak, an' dat blessed lil' angel wid her bare footses mos' on der grown'."

Seraph could hear no more. A sudden sob revealed her presence, and Romeo's expression suddenly changed from a look of mental agony to a ghastly attempt at a smile.

"Why, Miss Seraph, is you a cryin'? Bress my soul, what is yer cryin' fer, honey?"

"Because—because I am so sorry for you, Romeo," said Seraph, swallowing her sobs.

"Why, chile, yer don't t'ink I's goin' ter die, does yer? Shorely I ain't sick ernuff ter die, is I? My fever's done gone, on'y—on'y I is res'less an' onsartain like; my mine's sick; der misery's in my mine. I's tired ras'lin' wid der sperrit. I's done wore out; my 'ligion don't gib me peace, honey. Dat's my sickness mo' dan der fever."

"If it's your mind, Romeo, can't you do something to cure your mind?" asked Seraph persuasively. "Lisa just told me of a little girl who had misery in her mind, or perhaps it was her conscience. She had been wicked, and when she confessed, she got well right away and was able to sit up and eat pork and greens."

"Lor', chile, do tell me if dat's true!" And Romeo's haggard old face took on a hopeful look.

"Yes, Romeo, it's true. Lisa knew the little girl. *She* had something on her mind and she confessed."

"You say she 'fessed, Miss Seraph; now who did she 'fess to?"

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"To a Deacon Potts, I think Lisa said."

"Oh Lor', Miss Seraph, I couldn't git cured dat
a way. Dat would brung a r'proach on 'ligion, an'
de Bible say 'wo ter him dat brung der r'proach.'
No, no, I couldn't 'fess ter Deacon Spotts. No,
I couldn't 'fend der Lor' dat a way," repeated
Romeo uneasily and with unmistakable decision.

"Well, then, Romeo, couldn't you confess to
Uncle 'Nidas? He's so good and forgiving, couldn't
you confess to him?" urged Seraph sweetly. "I
want you to get well. Mamma needs you. She
isn't used to Lisa. Lisa doesn't market as you
do. Mamma says she spends too much money.
Oh, Romeo, you *must* confess and get well."

"I's feared o' M'sien' 'Nidas, honey; he mought
— he mought —"

"Oh no! Romeo; he won't; he told me, he said
if any one had — had — Well, you know what I
mean, Romeo. He said he wouldn't punish any
one. I can't explain, but if *I* had misery in my
mind as you have, I would send for dear Uncle
'Nidas and confess as soon as I could; so that I
could get well. I'm afraid if you don't you'll be
worse, and perhaps you'll never get over it."

Romeo groaned in the spirit. "Oh Lor', have

mussy on me. Oh, Miss Seraph, honey, I's a ras'-lin' wid der sperrit dis very minnit. It's turruble, turruble; I's mos' s'hausted. I's mos' outdone, but I's goin' ter git der victory. I's goin' ter 'fess all ter M'sieu' 'Nidas. Run, honey, run while I's got der strenf, an' quest him ter step in right off, er maybe I won't have der courage."

Seraph scarcely waited to hear the last of the sentence. She darted out, pale and tremulous with the importance of her mission.

In a moment she returned, her face bright and hopeful. "He is coming right away, Roineo; he's right behind me. Confess *everything*—don't be afraid—Uncle 'Nidas has promised to—to forgive—no matter what it is. Now I'll run and tell Lisa to cook you some pork and greens."

When Monsieur Nardi entered the shed room, the old negro was sitting up, holding out his arms entreatingly, and fairly writhing under the stress of the moment.

"Oh, M'sieu' Nardi, I wants ter 'fess der trufe, der Lor's trufe; I wants ter tell you what a sinner I is, but won't yer promise me not ter take der law on me, not ter sen' me ter jail fer de sake of dese two pore children what's 'pendent on me?"

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"Go on, my old friend, go on; tell me all about
it," said Monsieur Nardi kindly; "and no matter
what it is, I promise to forgive you before I hear
it."

"Bress der Lor', bress der Lor'," murmured
Romeo fervently. "An' yer won't tell Miss
Louise, an' dat chile, please M'sieu' 'Nidas, 'cause
dey 'siders ole Romeo a good hones' servant."

"What passes between us will remain a secret.
Go on, my friend; don't be afraid, go on," urged
Monsieur Nardi gently.

"Yer see, M'sieu' Nardi, I's got ter tell yer all
dat story; I's got ter 'spose Miss Louise's pov'ty.
A'ter dat money done stop comin' from Germany
she was dreffully pinched, She didn't have
money ter buy som'fin ter eat, an' if it hadn't bin
fer Miss Cressy a-givin' me lil' things outen yore
kitchen, an' what money she paid me fer 'sistin'
her, they would o' gone hungry plenty times, an'
Miss Louise was gettin' peaked an' weak, an'
couldn't sit up to make dem flowers, 'cause she
didn't have der med'cine, der Jew-crow, what der
doctor done ordered, an' Miss Seraph's shoes was all
wored out, an' no money to buy some. One day
I found two loose boards in der fence, an' I use

ter slip 'em aside an' step inter yore kitchen, when Miss Cressy was a-waitin' on you, 'cause she done told me I could pick up any lil' thing ter eat, what was a settin' 'roun', an' wasn't no use. An' dat mawnin' I seed er basket er grapes on der table by der win'er, an' der glass was open, and I jes' reach frew ter take a han'ful fer Miss Louise, 'cause she likes grapes pow'ful, an' right dar on der table, jes' as if der good Lor' done put it on pu'pose fer me ter take, was two silber dollars, one fer de Jew-crow an' one fer Miss Seraph's shoes. I didn't stop ter think dat it mought be stealin'. I jes' clap 'em in my ole pocket, an' step quick frew der hole in der fence, an' no one ain't seen me in yore yard dat mawnin', an' no one ain't knowed 'bout dat hole in der fence. Den Miss Louise sont me wid de flowers, an' done tol' me ter ask Ma'me Croizet ter pay her a lil' mo', 'cause dey was mo' wuk, an' Ma'me Croizet she 'fuse ter gib a nickle mo'; but I jes' bought der Jew-crow, an' tole Miss Louise how Ma'me Croizet sont her two dollars extra, den I bought der shoes fer Miss Seraph wid der las' dollar. Now, M'sieu' 'Nidas, I done tole yer de whole trufe, an' what gib me der misery in my mine was 'cause dat

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pore boy got blamed fer my wickednesses. Now
 yer knows *he* didn't take dat money."

"I knew that before," said Monsieur Nardi
 quietly.

"An' you didn't s'pect me?"

"No, Romeo, I didn't suspect you, because I
 didn't know about the hole in the fence," returned
 the old gentleman dryly. "It is true, my poor
 old friend, that the temptation was very great,
 but I wish you had asked for the money. It
 would have saved much trouble. Never allow
 yourself to be tempted again. Come to me when
 you need anything. Do you understand? Come
 to me. I am glad that you have had the courage,
 even at this late hour, to confess your fault.
 Now lie down and go to sleep, and to-morrow
 you will feel better."

"Bress der Lor', M'sieu' 'Nidas! Bress der Lor'!
 You's mighty good ter me, an' I feel der misery
 a-goin' off a'ready. I's better a'ready. Tank der
 Lor'!" And Romeo laid his trembling old head
 back on his pillow, with the feeling of one who
 has been suddenly relieved of an oppressive burden.
 "What a noble soul the child has," thought
 Monsieur Nardi, as he went back to his shop.

"She knew it was Romeo who took the money, and in order to clear Marc, and at the same time to shield her old servant, she preferred that I should think she was guilty. I knew there was something back of it all that I did not understand. There would have been no mystery had I known that my yard had another entrance besides the gate which Cressy guards so faithfully. Well, I am glad it is explained at last. Now, if I could find Marc, I should be happy again."

who took the money, and at the same time she preferred that I should know there was no mystery had I another entrance besides the old one. Well, I was so faithful. Well, I was at last. Now, if I be happy again."

XXV.

THE WHITE SHIP.

IT was a year after Marc's departure, and spring had come around again. The fig tree in Monsieur Nardi's garden was putting forth its leaves, and the multiflora rose was one mass of pale blossoms. Nearly every evening Seraph came to play her Cremona under its fragrant shade, while Monsieur Nardi sat near by and listened dreamily. Sometimes Professor Vortman joined them, and often Louise was brought out in her wheel-chair to enjoy the sweetness and beauty of spring.

Romeo, in his confession, had given Monsieur Nardi a hint for a very convenient and pleasant arrangement. Where the loose pickets had been, much to Seraph's delight, Uncle 'Nidas had put a little gate, and as it always stood open, the two yards were like one. Monkey romped in and out, and Toto, who appreciated beauty in a wise, serious way, passed most of his time on Louise's work-table, examining her flowers with a fastidious air, and

sniffing at them a little disdainfully, as if he knew that they lacked perfume; and even Flute's cage hung as often on one side of the fence as on the other, while the best understanding existed between the domestics of the two small families.

Cressy and Romeo were mutually interested, working together in beautiful harmony for the general good. Seraph was practising with constant delight, and always improving under the careful instruction of her excellent professor, who now had as many pupils as he desired, but none who equalled in talent and beauty Cousin Franz's little *protégée*. Louise worked cheerfully at her numerous orders, which yielded her a comfortable income. Owing to Madame St. Maxent's kindness, her health was improving, and each day she felt stronger, happier, and more hopeful.

While there was only peace and harmony in the little cottage on St. Louis Street, Cousin Franz, in his larger and more imposing house, often found himself disturbed by small squalls and contrary winds. Madge, the demure and docile Madge, was beginning to develop a character of her own, and much to her parent's astonishment, a rather light and frivolous character.

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and harmony in the eet, Cousin Franz, in ; house, often found qualls and contrary d docile Madge, was ter of her own, and ment, a rather light

Madame Arnet, notwithstanding her stolid and practical nature, was not without vanity, and a kind of envy, which she dignified with the name of ambition. Since Seraph had made influential friends, she wished that Madge should also; therefore she had put her little daughter at a fashionable school on Esplanade Avenue, where she associated with rich and dressy girls who had been brought up in a manner entirely at variance with Cousin Franz's ideas and theories. And quiet, demure little Madge saw a great deal with her large light eyes, and heard a great deal with the small ears nestled under her fawn-colored hair.

Madge said little, but she thought the more. She knew that she had money left her by her father; she imagined that she was rich, and she saw no reason why she could not have flowers and feathers in her hats, and wear smart little silk frocks as well as the other girls in her class. Her taste for millinery was rapidly improving. From being a manufacturer of dolls' *confections* she became a *connoisseuse* of larger headgear, and objected so strenuously to her plain hats and equally plain frocks, that her mother and Cousin Franz were scandalized.

She suddenly announced a distaste for the solid language of her forefathers, and declared a preference for French and Italian, which was followed up by a fancy for china-painting. Really, Madge was developing in the most remarkable manner. It was very much as though a meek dove had unexpectedly changed into a gay macaw.

Madame Arnet stitched away, outwardly calm, but inwardly floundering in deep waters of doubt and anxiety; while Cousin Franz, more perplexed than ever over the enigma of the human mind, wished devoutly that another Professor Vortman would turn up and solve the problem in Madge's case as easily and successfully as it had been solved in Seraph's.

And while all these little incidents were taking place, and the drama of each life was unfolding as the destiny of each decreed, nothing was heard of Marc, and Monsieur Nardi, although never reconciled to the thought, began to feel that the boy was gone forever, and it was a shadow on his life and on his heart that never could be lifted until he found the means of making some reparation for the wrong done the child.

One lovely evening, when twilight was drawing

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on, he wandered down to the levee, and stood in
his accustomed place, hat in hand, while the
delicious breeze fanned his forehead.

The conditions were much the same as on that
night when he had first seen the honest eyes of
the boy peering at him from under the fold of
canvas. There was just such a pile of cotton
bales, the fluffy little bunches sticking to the
weather-worn tarpaulin,—the same little niches
where a thin, large-eyed boy might hide;—just
such a pile of old boards as had concealed his
humble treasures.

Great black ships lay with their bulwarks high
above the levee, for the river, nearly even with
its banks, was rushing and swirling along on its
impetuous way to the Gulf. The steamers puffed
and groaned in mid-stream, and now and then
the shrill whistle of a tug echoed from the
farther shore. There was the same saffron and
rose sky, the same black, trailing smoke, the same
sunset tints on the water; all appeared the same.
It seemed as if there had been no change, and
that he might turn his head at any moment and
see those great brown eyes looking at him.

But no; there was not a living being near him.

Even Patsy had deserted his post. Perhaps he was away up the levee searching some new arrival. For the old watchman had not renounced hope. At the sight of a foreign ship coming around the bend, his old heart always gave a throb of expectancy, he always felt that perhaps the long-expected traveller of the sea had arrived, bringing the little waif, or some tidings of him.

Seeing no one near him, Monsieur Nardi turned his attention again towards the river; when suddenly coming around the bend he saw a great white ship, so white and glistening, so majestic and stately as she proudly cut her way through the swift, strong current, coming nearer and nearer, until the steady throbs of her great heart were audible above the swirl and rush of the river. She was a beautiful image of strength and grace, and even of hope and happiness to Monsieur Nardi. As he watched her, his eyes kindled and his cheeks flushed.

"Ah!" he said to himself, "a white ship. I remember it was a white ship that took Marc away. I remember I stood just here and watched her disappear around the bend; only it was the morning sun that shone on her. The sky was

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blue, and the river sparkled like liquid gold. The water was not as high nor as swift. The trees on the farther shore looked as if they were stencilled in black against the silvery white clouds. It was beautiful. I remember that I was impressed with the beauty of the scene, but my heart was heavy at the sight of the great white ship taking the boy away. Now here comes a white ship, returning from a distance, and it may be the very one. The boy may be on her. Yes, even now he may be looking eagerly toward this very spot. Ah! the white ship returning at sunset may bring back what she took away at sunrise."

Suddenly there was a slackening in the speed of the great ship. She paused, shivered from stem to stern, and then rolled from side to side as if impatient at being checked on her onward career. A muffled, harsh, discordant sound came faintly across the water. She was paying out her anchor chains. She was anchoring in mid-stream for the night.

XXVI.

IN DANGER.

WHEN Monsieur Nardi saw that the white ship had cast anchor below the city, and that there was no prospect of her arriving at the wharf that night, he felt deeply disappointed.

Although he could not be positive, yet he felt quite sure that it was the same ship that had taken Marc away, and the impression that he had returned with her grew strong upon him. After watching her for some time he still lingered in the hope that Patsy might appear, for he knew that the old watchman was well acquainted with every foreign ship that entered the river, and could tell him positively whether it was the one on which the boy had sailed.

But Patsy did not turn up, and darkness was rapidly gathering every object into its dense gray folds. The great white steamer looked as dim and ghostly as a phantom ship. The farther shore was no longer visible, all the color had faded out

of the sky, leaving it a mournful purple, while here and there a pale star glistened like a touch of silver on a funeral pall.

The river complained and fretted against its barriers in sullen remonstrance, or now and then dashed angrily among the massive piles as if impatient to break its bounds and rush unimpeded over the fair land. The wind rose suddenly, and a chilling mist swept up from the Gulf. Monsieur Nardi drew his coat together and turned reluctantly away. He could learn nothing more until morning.

He had not felt well of late; he had been troubled with insomnia; and finding himself restless and sleepless when he reached home, he decided not to retire at his usual hour, but instead, to work on a catalogue which he was preparing; so he lit his reading-lamp in the sitting-room behind the shop and laid out his papers and books on the table.

After working busily for a while he found that he needed a certain book of reference, and lighting a candle he went into his shop to search for it. He placed his candle on a lower shelf which projected beyond the upper ones, and set about pulling

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out a great many books and papers in order to find what he was looking for. At last, when he had secured it, he returned to his sitting-room in a thoughtful, preoccupied mood, and left the burning candle where he had placed it. Then he drew up his reading-chair, and putting the book, which was heavy, on the movable desk in front of him, he settled himself comfortably to look up his authorities.

For some time he worked on steadily, then a drowsiness began to creep over him. He had slept little for several nights, and he was greatly in need of "nature's sweet restorer," so he let his head fall back against the comfortable cushion of the chair, and in a few moments he was sleeping profoundly.

It was midnight, and in St. Louis Street everything was quiet. The neighboring families had all retired. There were no lights visible in the windows, and no sound broke the silence only the occasional step of a belated and solitary passer. It was a moonless night, and the dense mist filled the narrow street. There were watery halos about the lamps burning dimly at the corner of each square, and all else was enfolded in darkness.

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hour that a passer would have been startled to see a small figure sitting in a door-way opposite to Monsieur Nardi's shop. His elbow was on his knee, and his chin rested on the palm of his hand. His narrow, pale face made a white spot under a sailor's cap, on the ribbon of which faintly gleamed a silver anchor. A sailor's blue shirt and trousers completed his costume, which appeared altogether too large and too mature for him. He looked a delicate, sickly boy of twelve, very neglected, and very forlorn. And as he sat there, he seemed to have but one object, and that was to stare with unnaturally large eyes at the dark and forbidding front of Monsieur Nardi's shop.

The wooden shutters were closed tightly under their iron bars, and even the blinds on the upper rooms were "shut in" instead of being "bowed," as they usually were.

"He's sound asleep," thought the boy. "Every one's asleep. It don't seem as if any one in the whole street was awake. There ain't even a p'lice-man about. It's enough sight lonesomer than aboard ship out in the stream. It's even lonesomer than on the levee. I wish I'd stayed aboard to-night instead of comin' off in the boat. I

thought I'd find Mr. Patsy on the wharf, an' I knowed he'd be glad to see me, but he wasn't there. Oh, I've been gone so long that lots o' things might of happened. Perhaps Mr. Patsy's dead. Perhaps Mr. 'Nidas is dead. Maybe every one's dead. These houses don't look as if any one was alive in 'em. I guess I'll go back to the wharf an' hunt up my old bed among the cotton bales."

Then, with a deep sigh:

"It's all the home I've got to go to. I don't s'pose Mr. 'Nidas wants to see me; he don't want to see no thief. If he ain't found out that I didn't steal that money, he might run me in even now. Well, I ain't goin' to take no risks. I ain't goin' to be locked up for nothin'. I've got to clear out pretty sharp. I mustn't be caught a-hangin' 'round here. I must look up a vessel bound out early in the mornin' an' get out the way again, but I'd like to see Mr. 'Nidas; I'd jest like to git a little sight of him, an' he not know it. If I could 'a come early, before the shutters was up, I could 'a saw him an' all them books, but I didn't darst to come up early, fear I'd git caught. I wouldn't mind a puttin' off to sea again, if I could jest git a sight of him, an' Monkey, an' Toto. An' Seraph,

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too. Yes, Seraph. Me an' her was chums. She
liked me. I wonder if she knowed they thought
I stole. I'd 'a brought her some beads from Cal-
cutta, only I was afeard she knowed, an' wouldn't
take 'em. Well, I guess I'll go back to the levee.
I can't see no more by stayin' here."

With a discouraged sigh he arose and prepared
to move on, when suddenly he saw through the
mist a faint gleam of light that seemed to emerge
from under the shutters of Monsieur Nardi's shop.
As he looked, it spread out in pale, sickly rays,
growing stronger and brighter each moment; then,
like spears of dull gold, they darted out from every
tiny crack and opening,—above, below, all around.
There must be a brilliant light within to emit such
beams through the small chinks of those closely
fitting shutters.

In an instant Marc was across the street with
his eyes pressed close to the crack from which the
largest ray proceeded, but he could distinguish noth-
ing save a bright, glaring, blinding light, as though
the whole interior was in one blaze.

"It's fire—fire!" he called. His voice seemed
choked in the mist and darkness, but even while
he shouted, he was scaling the high fence. He

knew, when once within the yard, that he could awaken Cressy and alarm the house.

The blinds of the sitting-room were not closed, and as soon as his feet touched the brick pavement of the yard he saw the light from the window, and through the muslin curtain he also saw Monsieur Nardi lying back in his chair, — ghastly pale and apparently lifeless. The reading-lamp burned on the table, the door between the shop and the room was slightly ajar, and the baleful glare that shone through pale the light of the lamp. A dense black smoke filled the room and hung like a cloud over Monsieur Nardi's pallid face, and already the odor of the burning books could be detected, — that sickening, stifling odor of burning leather and paper.

With one rapid glance, the boy took in the situation. Springing on to the gallery like a little tiger, he dashed in a pane of glass and unbolted the window. In an instant the horrible smoke met him, surrounded him, seeming to grasp him as something solid and tangible; it repelled and buffeted him, seizing him by the throat with a strangling clutch, but he fought against it with fierce strength and courage until he reached the side of the unconscious old man.

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There was not a moment to lose. A superhuman power seemed to be given him. Grasping the inert form with fingers which felt like steel, he pulled him from his chair and dragged him through the window, out of the smoke, out of the very jaws of death, on to the gallery, where the cool night air swept over him with life-giving freshness.

Then he flew to Cressy's door and aroused her with violent blows and cries. She heard him, and called in a terrified voice, "What has happened?"

Had not Marc known the place so intimately, he could never have accomplished what he did. He was aware that a bucket, always full of water, to be used in an emergency, stood under the faucet of the cistern. The cistern was close beside the gallery, therefore it was only a few steps to the burning books.

Leaving Monsieur Nardi to recover in the fresh air, he plunged into the shop with the bucket of water, splashing and dashing it against the rows of burning books. They had been smouldering for some time before they blazed, which accounted for the density of smoke. By the time Marc had returned with his second bucket of water, Cressy

had come to his aid, and together they saturated the bookshelves until the flames were subdued.

Then Marc and Cressy, almost at their last gasp from the smoke, threw the doors wide open, and a current of cool air soon relieved them from suffocation.

Not until Marc had torn the burning books out of the shelves and thoroughly drenched them with water, did he go to Monsieur Nardi's relief. Cressy was already administering to his needs. She had placed a pillow under his head, and wet his nostrils with spirits of ammonia, while she slapped and rubbed his limp hands vigorously.

After a few minutes, his chest rose and fell slightly with the labored breath, and with a shuddering gasp he opened his eyes and looked around him wildly; he was safe, but he was not fully conscious.

It was not until Monsieur Nardi had recovered his faculties, and began to understand that something unusual had happened, that Marc realized how badly he was burned. His scorched hair and blistered hands and face showed that he had been through a terrible ordeal of fire.

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XXVII.

A LITTLE HERO.

IT is only doing Marc justice to say that at first he did not know, and perhaps never fully understood, how he, by his heroic courage and promptitude, had saved not only Monsieur Nardi's life, and probably Cressy's, but all of the most valuable books in the collection of the old *bouquiniste*.

The harmless-looking candle that had been left in the shop in a moment of preoccupation, had burned the edge of the shelf above it, and in this way communicated the fire to the under part of the row of books, where it must have smouldered for some time before Marc saw the blaze through the chinks of the shutters. Fortunately the fire occurred on the opposite side of the shop from where stood the glass case that contained the antiques, and in fact all of the really valuable volumes; therefore they were injured neither by fire, smoke, nor water.

It was some time before Monsieur Nardi was sufficiently recovered to understand the full extent of the accident. The first person he recognized was Marc, who was anxiously bending over him, and confused and bewildered as he was, he showed no surprise at seeing him; but he noticed at once how terribly the boy was burned, and his distress was so great that he did not think either of his own condition nor of his losses.

Cressy had escaped with very slight injuries, and her first proceeding, when she saw her master recovering, was to run to the next yard, awake Romeo, and despatch him for a doctor. And it was not until Marc's burns were dressed, and he was in bed sleeping quietly under the effect of an opiate, that the poor old gentleman began to collect his thoughts, and to wonder where the boy came from, and how it happened that he had appeared on the scene at such an opportune moment.

Then he remembered the white ship that he had watched the preceding evening. "I felt that he was aboard of her," he said to Cressy, while tears of thankfulness filled his eyes. "*Le bon Dieu* sent him to save us. We owe him our lives; *n'est ce pas, ma bonne?* And we must show

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our gratitude by doing everything to make him happy."

"Yes, monsieur," said Cressy, humbly. "We owe him a great deal, and I can never forgive myself for my suspicions. You shall see that from this day I will be a mother to him."

The first visit in the morning was from Seraph, who came at a very early hour. She had heard from Romeo of Marc's return, and of the terrible accident, and hastened to offer her childish condolence. Monsieur Nardi took her for a moment to Marc's room: "Just for a moment, *ma petite*, because the poor boy is suffering and must be kept very quiet."

When Seraph saw Marc, with his face and hands bandaged, and his hair quite gone in places, she could scarcely repress her sobs. After a few whispered words of sorrow, she pressed a tearful kiss on his smarting forehead, and slipped quietly out to talk it all over with Uncle 'Nidas, and to wonder, as he did, how Marc had happened there just at the right moment.

"We must wait, *ma chère*, until he is better; then he will explain everything. In the meantime we must thank *le bon Dieu* for sending him to save

my life; for had he not come when he did I should have been buried under the ruins of my burning house. The deadly smoke suffocated me while I was sleeping; I was unconscious and would have known nothing."

At this frightful picture Seraph threw her arms around her old friend's neck, and they wept together.

Long before Marc was well every trace of the fire had disappeared from the little shop. The burned *débris* was removed, and new shelves were built and filled with new books, all of which the insurance company paid for.

Monsieur Nardi was a man of business and always kept his property well insured, therefore he suffered no actual loss; but had he put his candle down on the other side of his shop, insurance could not have recompensed him for the treasures that would have been destroyed. Marc's heroism in extinguishing the fire, and all his smarting burns, would have been a useless sacrifice, as there were a few famous volumes which Monsieur Nardi and other distinguished bibliomaniacs declared to be without a duplicate in any of the known collections.

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sit up and talk freely, he told Monsieur Nardi and Seraph all of his adventures, and how it happened that he was on the spot when the fire broke out. Before this, however, Monsieur Nardi had found an opportunity to assure the boy that he had never really believed him guilty of the act that had caused so much unhappiness, and that now he knew who the real culprit was, and that Seraph knew also; therefore he must think no more of that unpleasant episode.

"I'm glad Seraph knowed I didn't steal," was Marc's rejoinder, "an' now I wish I'd brought them beads from Calcutta; she would 'a took them, I guess."

"Taken them," corrected Monsieur Nardi. "You see, *mon cher enfant*, that you must go to school as soon as you are well."

These are Marc's little adventures as told by himself:

"Yes, sir, I'll begin at that night I run away. I didn't want to go. I never had such a soft place as this was, with good togs, plenty to eat, and all the story books I could read; but I didn't darst to stay after that. I thought you wouldn't have no respec', no confience in me, an' I was riled to

think you'd s'pect *me* when you knowed I was hones', when Mr. Patsy told you I was; so that mornin' when the white steamer wanted a cabin boy Mr. Patsy 'vised me to ship, 'cause the steward said he'd be right good to me, an' bring me back; an' Mr. Patsy said you'd have a chance to find out while I was gone, and then you'd — well, never mind — that's why I went, and I was in luck for a land-lubber.

"I wasn't off grub a single day, that is, I wasn't seasick. The work wasn't so hard, an' the cap'ain lent me some books; an' the old tars spun lots of yarns, 'bout pirates, flyin' Dutchmen, an' mare maids, an' ghos' ships, enuff to make your hair stan' up; an' they let me listen, 'cause they knowed me; all them old tars seen me runnin' 'bout the levee, an' they called me the levee kid 'stead of the wharf rat. It sounded more 'spectable.

"On the voyage out I had a fine time; but when we got in Liverpool I found out the white ship wasn't comin' back, so I shipped on a three-master, a sailin'-vessel bound for Calcutta. An' I wasn't no cabin boy, I was the cook's boy; there's where the hard knocks come in. I was always in everybody's way, an' when they wanted me to get out,

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they just banged me over the head or kicked me;
but I had plenty o' sand. I didn't whimper, an'
when they saw I wasn't no land-lubber they left
off a-teasin' me.

"On the voyage back I was took with the ship-
fever, an' I don't know how long I was laid up.
When we got in Liverpool I was so weak I couldn't
crawl out o' my bunk, so they sent me to the
horsepital; there I had mighty good livin', a soft
bed an' a nurse; she was al'ays a-doin' something
to make me feel better. An' sometimes she read
to me out of a book, all about Daniel an' the lions,
an' Joseph's coat, an' a man nailed to a cross, for
the sins of the world, she said. They were fine
stories—I liked 'em, an' I'll never forget them.

"One mornin' I was well an' they turned me
out. The nurse gave me a shillin', an' that book
she read out of. It's named Holy Bible. I left
it in my bunk that night I come ashore, and I
s'pose it's lost. When I got out the horsepital, I
had nowhere to go, so I started for the docks, an'
the first thing I see layin' off in the river ready to
start, was the white steamer. An' while I was
lookin' an' wishin' I was aboard of her, down
come the steward an' some o' the men. The launch

was a-waitin' for 'em, an' the minit they see me they all hollered, 'Why, there's the little levee kid!' So they took me off to the ship, an' I worked my passage home.

"That night when I got ashore in the boat, I looked all 'round for Mr. Patsy, but I couldn't find him, so I just run up here to see the old place. I 'spected to go away again, an' I wanted — well, I — — well — I didn't see no one it was so late an' all the houses was shut up. So I set down in a door opposite to rest, an' maybe I went to sleep, it was so dark an' quiet. Then all of a sudden I seen the light shine out atween the shutters, an' I run across an' there was the fire. I yelled 'fire,' but nobody heard. Then I jumped the fence, an' woke Cressy, an' Cressy an' me, we put it out. I couldn't 'a got it out if it hadn't been for Cressy's helpin'. That's how I happened to be on the spot in the nick o' time, 'cause I couldn't help it, that's all."

VIOLINISTE.

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XXVIII.

• • • AT MADAME ST. MAXENT'S.

IT was some time before the burns on Marc's face and hands were entirely healed, and even after they were quite well, the ugly red scars were a constant reminder to Monsieur Nardi that the boy had risked his life to save him and his property, and never a young hero was more praised and applauded than he. Patsy the watchman, Cressy, and Romeo almost disputed for the honor of serving him, and Uncle 'Nidas and Seraph vied with each other in their numerous attentions.

Even Madame St. Maxent visited his little room to express her admiration for his courage and prompt action in saving the life of her valued friend. And when he was able to go out she took him in her carriage with Louise and Seraph, to drive in the country, or through the quiet, shady parks, where they loitered under the great oaks, drinking in delicious draughts of fresh, pure air, which gave new strength and life to the child's

feeble, shrunken frame, and brought back the color to his pallid face.

Sometimes they drove to the West End, where Madame St. Maxent would order a delicious lunch of fresh fruits and ices, served in one of the pavilions overlooking the lovely lake. Then Seraph and Marc would wander through the walks among the trees and flowers, peeping into the grottoes, and hurrying, breathlessly, with much laughter, through the intricacies of the maze, from which they would emerge as elated as though they had accomplished some remarkable feat. After they had visited all the shows, they would return home by the beautiful shell road, light-hearted and happier for their day's outing.

To Marc, who had been so cruelly buffeted by misfortune, these luxuries and pleasures were like glimpses of paradise. And in comparison, the memory of those dreadful days on the East India ship, the fever, the dark noisome bunk where he lay suffering and neglected, were like a horrible nightmare, and the contrast made him so grateful and happy that it was a pleasure to do him a kindness.

"Bring the little hero and Seraph to tea next

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Saturday," said Madame St. Maxent to Monsieur Nardi, one morning when he was in the shop. "Maurice wants to see him. Excuse a mother's vanity, but I begin to think that Maurice has a fine character; he admires bravery, and the courage of the little fellow delighted him. Yesterday he surprised me by saying that he did not wish to go to college. His tutor says that he will never distinguish himself in the humanities. He really does not like to study, yet he seldom fails in his lessons, because he is conscientious and ambitious, and he works very hard for what he gets. He loves music and art, he has quite a talent for drawing; but his preference is for architecture. He tells me he would like to be an architect and builder. I do not encourage him in that idea. With his fortune there is no need of his going into business, and I shall not urge him to take a collegiate course unless he wishes to do so.

"What is the use of a boy spending four or five years in honest or dishonest efforts to have the stamp of a university when he has no aptitude for letters? If he wishes, he can travel with a tutor, and gain his education by studying the world and his fellow-creatures. That will broaden

him, and develop what is best in him. He loves Nature, and I wish him to live near to her. A boy who understands and loves Nature cannot be ignoble.

"Then he has what I consider another fine trait of character—he loves animals. And I hold that one who loves and is kind to dumb creatures must have a good heart. I do not wish to thwart or curb any of his reasonable desires; I only wish to cultivate what is best in him. I do not mean to say that he is perfect, but his faults are all on the side of thoughtless generosity. As he grows older he will be wiser, and I trust he will make a fine man.

"Excuse a mother's weakness, *mon ami*. I know I talk too much about my son; but you see I am like a hen with one chick, and I make as much fuss over my one as other mothers would over a dozen. *Mais, en fin, cher ami*, bring the children Saturday. We will have tea in the garden, Seraph and Maurice can play a duet, and I will show you the improvements I have made in my library."

Seraph never looked prettier than on that Saturday, when she went to take tea with Madame St

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Maxent. Since her mother earned such a nice little income, she could afford to dress her child daintily.

On this occasion she wore the finest and softest of white frocks, and a broad white hat shaded her abundant yellow hair, which her mother had brushed until it shone like threads of gold. Marc, in spite of his scars, which were daily becoming less noticeable, and his closely cropped hair, looked very well, in a neat suit bought for the occasion. And Monsieur Nardi felt that he had every reason to be proud of his two little *protégés*.

When they arrived, Marc carrying Seraph's violin, they were admitted by the black footman, whose broad expanse of linen and fine broadcloth were only rivalled by the gloss of his skin, and conducted very ceremoniously to the beautiful garden, where, under a spreading orange tree, was arranged the prettiest tea-table the children had ever seen. It was covered with a dainty cloth embroidered with sweet peas in delicate shades of silk, and in the centre, in a large glass bowl, was a mound of the same fragrant blossoms. The sun peeped through the branches, and glinting on the tea-kettle of *repoussé* silver, made the colored glass and china sparkle like jewels.

Madame St. Maxent wore a rose silk tea-gown. Against the dark green of the foliage she looked like a lovely Watteau. And Maurice was as handsome as a young lord, in a *négligé* suit of the latest mode, his dark curly head bare, and the ends of his blue scarf fluttering in the breeze.

When they were seated at the table, they were a merry little group; for notwithstanding the unaccustomed elegance, the children were quite at their ease. They were happy, and youth and happiness can never be stiff and awkward. The servant brought fruits and ices for the children, while Madame St. Maxent and Monsieur Nardi sipped their tea and nibbled their biscuit, keeping up a charming conversation, simple and light enough for all to enjoy.

After the pleasant meal was over, Maurice took Seraph and Marc to show them the stable, his horses and dogs, and his other pet animals, of which he had an interesting collection. Then they wandered about the garden, and over the lawn; they saw the fountains full of gold and silver fish; Seraph and Marc went into ecstasies over some very funny Japanese fish, with iridescent scales, and two curious wiggling tails. And there were

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the statues among the foliage, and the strange
beautiful flowers to be duly admired, and after
that the violins were brought out, and Maurice
and Seraph, with their young heads together,
looked over the music they were to play, and then
turned, and twisted, and tuned their respective
instruments into accord for the duet.

While the children were interesting and amus-
ing themselves under the chaperonage of Maurice,
Madame St. Maxent and Monsieur Nardi were in-
specting the improvements in the library, engaged
in a very learned, and no doubt instructive, dis-
cussion of their favorite subject, — old books, *tou-
jours* old books.

Presently they came out to their seats under the
orange tree. The music-stands were put in place,
the music arranged, and Seraph and Maurice played
one of Schumann's charming duets. And while
they played, the rays of the setting sun crept
across the lawn and lingered where the petals of
the orange flowers fell on the grass, as white and
noiseless as flakes of snow.

A little breeze just touched the sweet olive and
myrtle, swinging the blossoms like perfumed cen-
sers, while a mocking-bird hanging on the twig of

a red-bud tree, twittered faintly and sweetly until the last notes of the duet died away on the soft air, and then, whether intoxicated with the music, or in a spirit of rivalry, it poured out strain after strain of the most delicious melody, spreading its wings, and fluttering from branch to branch while it sang on deliriously and wildly, until the sun had fairly set, the happy children had turned their faces homeward, and darkness and silence had settled down on Madame St. Maxent's beautiful garden.

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XXIX.

THE REVOLT OF MADGE.

MONSIEUR NARDI had placed Marc at a small private school on Conti Street, where he studied so well and made such excellent progress, that the teacher, who was a friend of the old bookseller, often made a favorable report.

"The boy drinks in knowledge as a dry plant drinks in rain," he said. "He loves to study, and he has a retentive memory; he will make rapid strides, and will soon be of great assistance to you. The most serious difficulty I have is in correcting his faults of speech. It is not easy to overcome the habit of a lifetime."

"Be patient with the child, *mon ami*," said Monsieur Nardi gently. "Remember that he has never been taught. He has grown up as neglected as a weed springing by the road side. We cannot expect him to blossom at once into a rare flower. I am sure he has the gifts and graces of an uncommonly fine character. Have patience, and we shall see. We shall see."

While Marc was fully occupied with his studies, and while Seraph was striving after greater excellence in her music, poor little Madge seemed to be deteriorating. She did not progress in the fashionable school as her mother hoped she would do; and she had come to a decided standstill in her German, while her piano lessons were so distasteful that she resorted to all sorts of subterfuges to avoid them. Professor Vortman had long since told Cousin Franz that it was wasting time and money, that she had no music in her, and would never get beyond mediocrity. The only progress she made, if one dare call it progress, was in her love for fine clothes. The girls in her school dressed very fashionably, and she felt that she ought to do as they did.

One day she came to visit Seraph, and the two little maids went out to the seat under the oleander tree for a confidential chat.

"Mamma is awfully severe and so stingy," said Madge complainingly.

"But you go to a fashionable school, and that costs a great deal of money," returned Seraph. "My mamma can't afford to send me to school. I have to study with her, and then I read some

with his studies, after greater excellence seemed to be less in the fashion- and she would do; standstill in her were so distasteful of subterfuges than had long since wasting time and in her, and would The only progress progress, was in her girls in her school she felt that she

raph, and the two seat under the oleat. and so stingy," said le school, and that " returned Seraph. and me to school. I then I read some

with Uncle 'Nidas and Marc. You have a great deal more than I do, Madge; you have a great many new frocks."

"Yes, woollen and gingham," continued Madge discontentedly; "but I want a silk frock. All the girls in my class wear silk frocks on Sunday, and some wear them to school."

"Mamma does not allow me to wear a silk frock either," said Seraph, "and I don't mind it. I really don't want one."

"You would if you went to my school," replied Madge decidedly. "It's very unkind of mamma not to let me have one."

"But, Madge, don't you think your mamma knows best what you should wear?" asked Seraph persuasively.

"No, I don't! Mamma isn't fashionable. She doesn't know how fashionable people dress," continued Madge, in a disrespectful tone; "besides, I have money of my own. My papa left me money, and mamma has no right to dress me like a child in an orphan asylum. The girls laugh at me, and say I look like one of the children of the house of the Good Shepherd."

"Oh, Madge, they must be very rude girls to

say that. I should not mind them," said Seraph, flushing. "I'm sure you always look neat and nice."

"But there's no style in just looking neat. I want flowers and feathers in my hats. I'm tired of only ribbon, and I mean to have a change," said Madge, with calm decision.

"Why, what do you intend to do, Madge?" asked Seraph, in a surprised tone.

"You know I told you my secret about the dolls' hats, and you never told any one, did you?"

"No," said Seraph, "I never did."

"Well, now I'll tell you another, because I can trust you. I've made up my mind what to do. If mamma doesn't buy me a pink and white checked silk frock, and a Leghorn hat with a wreath of pink roses, I mean to leave home and learn the millinery trade."

"Oh, Madge!" exclaimed Seraph horrified.

"Why, of course I shall. Didn't I tell you I intended to have a shop on Rue Royale. I haven't changed my mind," continued Madge, quietly but firmly; "and before I go into business I must learn the trade. Then I shall have the money papa left me, and open a shop."

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"But, Madge, you are too young. No one could go into business at your age," said Seraph decidedly.

"I'm nearly thirteen, and I've got to learn my trade first. You know that *modiste* on Rue Royale; the largest, prettiest shop is the one I mean. Well, she takes girls no older than I am and teaches them the trade. I've inquired; I know all about it."

"Oh, Madge, don't do it. I wouldn't if I were you," pleaded Seraph.

"There, Seraph! that's just like a girl. Didn't you promise to go into the business with me? Weren't we to have a shop together? and now you're going back on your word!" exclaimed Madge hotly.

"But that was before I got back my violin," replied Seraph, flushing and confused. "I can't go with you now; I don't want a shop now."

"Because you've got what you want. If I could get what I want, I wouldn't have a shop either. Why, mamma and papa are even threatening to take me away from Madame Claire's school. I want to learn china painting. No, I want to do Kensington. No, I want to take Italian. No,

I want a pink silk frock and a white hat with roses. No, no, no, I'm tired to death of lectures, German, and darning; and, Seraph, I hate the piano worse than you do."

"Oh dear, Madge, I wish you wouldn't feel so. I don't know how to help you," said Seraph, her eyes filling with tears; "I wish you wouldn't leave home, I wish you wouldn't be a *modiste*."

"Well, you'll see," said Madge oracularly. "If they are so severe with me, I shall have to do something. I can't live and breathe by rule any longer. If you could hear the girls in my class tell of the fun they have at home. Paula Lacostes' mamma gave her a real party, and they had supper at ten, and Marie Doize gave a lunch her birthday, just like a grown-up luncheon. They had favors, and everything, and Marie wore a white silk frock that her mamma ordered from Hortense. Now, did I ever have a party? Did I ever have a luncheon? And our house is just horrid."

"Oh, Madge, such a fine large house, how can you say that?" cried Seraph, in astonishment.

"Yes, it's large enough, and as dreary as a convent. There isn't a pretty thing in it, and the garden is like a cemetery with those shell walks."

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and stiff clipped trees. Oh, I hate it! I feel as though I was in prison. I want some freedom, and I want to see something pretty."

Seraph was silenced by such strong arguments, but she was not convinced that the step Madge contemplated taking was at all right. Yet she felt dimly that there was fault somewhere, that some one was to blame for the barrenness of the child's life. She had always been a patient, docile little creature. What had so changed her? What had caused the worm to turn?

Seraph thought a great deal about Madge for several days after the visit; but as the communication was a secret of the most inviolable character, she could not speak of her fears and anxieties to her mother. Young as she was, she understood something of human nature, and she felt that Madge was a quietly stubborn little person, who, when once she made up her mind to do a thing, would persevere in spite of consequences.

Therefore Seraph was not surprised when, one morning, Cousin Franz entered with a very disturbed manner, and a face more serious than usual, and before they had fairly exchanged the accustomed greetings, exclaimed excitedly, "Louise,

Seraph, have you seen Madge? Has she been here this morning?"

Of course Madame Blumenthal was greatly shocked and surprised when she heard what had happened, but Seraph surmised what was coming, and she kept her own counsel.

"Madge has been very — very — I might say refractory," began Cousin Franz hesitatingly. "For some time she has seemed to be inclined to revolt against our authority, but the serious trouble began when we removed her, a few days ago, from Madame Claire's school. I never approved of her being sent there. It was entirely her mother's idea. All our trouble dates from that. The influence was very harmful; she received impressions of life totally at variance with my teaching.

"Yesterday her mother refused to purchase her certain unbecoming articles of dress, and she was rebellious and disrespectful, and I might say she revolted against her mother's authority, and threatened to leave home. Of course we thought this idle talk until this morning, when she did not appear at breakfast. Then we made inquiries and learned that she had left the house at an early hour.

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"This letter was found pinned on her pillow."
And Cousin Franz laid a crumpled sheet of paper
before Louise, who smiled as she read it, in spite
of the gravity of the occasion.

DEAR MAMMA, — If I can't go to Madame Clair's school, and
if I can't have that pink chek silk and that wite legorn hat, I
am goin away furever. You needn't surch for me; from this
time I am berried to you just as if I was dead and in my graiv.
I am goin to take the money in my mishunery box, and my new
shoes.

Your dutiful daughter,

MADGE.

XXX.

FOUND.

"YOU see how difficult it is for me to act in this matter," said Cousin Franz, after Louise had read Madge's letter, "for the reason that I do not wish to give publicity to a child's foolish *escapade*. Her mother thought that she might have come to you, or that she possibly said something to Seraph, during her last visit, that would give us some idea as to her whereabouts."

"Seraph did not mention to me that Madge spoke of leaving home. I think if she had, my child would have told me," and Louise looked inquiringly at Seraph, who appeared to be greatly distressed and confused.

"Madge was very unhappy. She said her mamma was severe and—and—unkind," replied Seraph evasively; "but I can't repeat what she told me. It is a secret, and I promised not to tell."

"But you must tell. If you know anything, y

must tell. It is of the greatest importance," insisted Cousin Franz.

"Please don't say that I *must* tell, when I promised not to," pleaded Seraph.

"*Ma chère*, don't you see what a very serious thing it is for Madge to leave her home in this way. If you know anything, I beg of you to tell Cousin Franz," urged Madame Blumenthal, somewhat annoyed at Seraph's reticence.

"But, mamma dear, how can I when I promised not to tell? I *promised*. It is a secret between Madge and me, and if I told it, she would never trust me again."

Louise gave Cousin Franz a discouraged look, and then she said, "Very well, my child, since you think it so important to keep your word, can't you think of some way to help us find Madge? You surely don't want the poor child disgraced; you don't want her advertised in the journals. You won't oblige us to employ the police to search for her if you can do anything."

Seraph remained silent for some moments. She seemed to be thinking deeply. Her soft little forehead was drawn in a frown, and her lips were firmly pressed together. At length she said cautiously:

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"Mamma, perhaps I can find Madge; if Cousin Franz will wait, I may be able to find her and fetch her home."

"But her mother is so distressed," said Cousin Franz uneasily, "she will not be willing to wait; she will insist on immediate action."

"It won't be long," replied Seraph. "If I can't find her, I will come directly and tell you. But if I do find her and fetch her home, won't you promise, dear Cousin Franz, not to be severe with her? Won't you forgive her, and won't you ask Cousin Rachel not to punish her?"

Cousin Franz looked very severe and unyielding, but at length he said reluctantly: "I will leave her entirely to her mother. I will trust her mother to deal justly with her. Leniency is not always kindness. However, I am convinced that I have no influence over Madge. I am mistaken in her character; she probably inherits her perverse disposition from her father. If she were my own child, I could cope with her; as it is, in future I shall leave her entirely to her mother. Now I shall return home and wait to hear from Seraph before I take any other step toward finding the undutiful, misguided child."

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her mother. Now I
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Then with a hurried good morning, he went
away as abruptly as he came, leaving Seraph to
prepare for her quest.

"I shall ask Uncle 'Nidas to go with me, mamma,
so you need not be anxious, and I shall find Madge
and bring her to you. She will be very unhappy,
and you will be sweet to her, won't you, *chère*
petite maman?" said Seraph, as she kissed her
mother and hurried away, feeling intensely the im-
portance of her mission.

"Dear me!" murmured Louise when she was
alone. "Who would have thought that quiet, de-
mure little thing had so much self-will and inde-
pendence. I wish she had not made a confidant
of Seraph. I don't like to have my child mixed
up with such an affair."

A little later in the day Monsieur Nardi and
Seraph were standing before the show window of
a fashionable *modiste* on Royal Street. They were
discussing the best means of procedure.

"I think she is here, in the workroom of this
shop," said Seraph, trying to peer between the hats
and bonnets, set pertly on wire frames, before the
glass.

"But, *ma chère*, why do you think she is here?"

asked Monsieur Nardi, anxious to know if there was any foundation for such a supposition.

Seraph was still guarding the sacred secret with all her little moral strength, and not even Uncle 'Nidas could wrest it from her. Therefore, with a non-committal smile, her eyes still searching the rear of the shop, she replied, "I can't tell *why*, but I think she is here. There's a workroom back of the shop, and when they pass in and out, I can get a glimpse of a long table, with a great many young girls on each side of it; but I don't see Madge. Still, I think she's there."

"Well, *ma chère*, let us go in and ask; that is the best way to settle it," said Monsieur Nardi, turning toward the door; and Seraph followed, her heart-beats audible to her own ears. It was a moment of intense excitement. If Madge should not be in that workroom! Where could she be? The poor child dared not think of the alternative.

As they entered, a pleasant-faced, overdressed woman came forward, bowing and smiling. "*Monsieur et mademoiselle, à votre service.*"

"*Merci bien, madame,*" returned Monsieur Nardi, also bowing and smiling. "Will you kindly tell

VIOLINISTE.

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"AS THEY ENTERED, A PLEASANT-FACED, WELL-DRESSED WOMAN CAME FORWARD, BOWING, SMILING."



me if you engaged a young girl this morning, by the name of Madge?"

"I do not know, monsieur. My forewoman engages the girls, but I think one came in this morning who gave the name of Maggie. I will inquire." And she touched a silver bell that stood on a table covered with delicious bits of silk, ribbons, and flowers, as harmoniously blended as though they were growing in a garden.

When the door into the workroom was about to open, Seraph craned her neck so as to command a good view of the interior; but, to her astonishment, it was Madge herself who opened the door, but Madge so changed and transformed, that one less well acquainted with her than was Seraph would scarcely have recognized her.

The most important change was in the fashion of dressing her hair. She had drawn her fawn-colored locks forward, and cut them off in a thick fringe close to her eyebrows; then her glossy braid was curled and fluffed, a finger or more below the red ribbon that tied it, leaving a thick tuft at the end, after the style of a clipped poodle; and she certainly must have made heavy inroads on her "mishunery box," in order to purchase the

red ribbons that adorned her drab little person. It was tied about her neck and hung in long ends behind. It was tied about her waist and hung in long ends in front. In fact, it was obvious that Madge had gratified her inordinate taste for red ribbons to its fullest extent.

But just at first Seraph did not notice the eccentricities of Madge's dress, for her eyes were fixed on the troubled, tear-stained face. The embryo *modiste* had evidently been handling a great many dusty articles, and using her fingers, instead of her handkerchief, to wipe away the too obtrusive signs of sorrow, for a smudgy circle under each eye gave her usually stolid face a very pathetic expression.

Before she was half through the opening of the door she saw Seraph and Monsieur Nardi. A flood of crimson swept from brow to chin, and she was about to shrink back, panting and trembling like a hunted hare, when Seraph darted forward and laid hold of her with a vigorous clutch.

"Oh, Madge, Madge! I'm so glad to find you. Come with me, come home!" she cried entreatingly.

Then ensued a little struggle, Madge trying to retreat into the workroom, and Seraph clinging to her with all her might.

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"I don't want to go, and I shan't," protested Madge, the tears starting in a torrent.

"But you must, you shall," insisted Seraph, looking appealingly at Monsieur Nardi, who stepped forward, smiling serenely, but saying calmly and decidedly, —

"Come, come, my dear child; this is foolish. Get your hat, like a good girl, and I will explain to Madame. I am sure she will excuse you and allow you to go with us."

Then Monsieur Nardi, in a few polite and pleasant words, informed the *modiste* that her little apprentice had left her home without the permission or knowledge of her mother, who was highly respectable and quite rich, and that he and her little cousin had come to fetch her back.

"Ah, *oui, monsieur*, I understand; a self-willed little thing," said the *modiste*, smiling and bowing them out, as pleasantly and politely as though they had bought a dozen hats.

Seraph glanced pityingly at Madge, who followed them reluctantly, looking very forlorn in her unaccustomed finery, crowned by a hat, in which, in the first moment of her freedom, she had triumphantly placed a large bunch of cheap red roses.

XXXI.

IN THE FOLD.

SERAPH thought it judicious, before she returned the wandering lamb to the fold, to freshen her up a little and make her more presentable. Therefore she insisted on taking the little rebel to Louise, whose sweetness and kindness, she knew, would have a softening effect, and tend to subdue the pride and self-will of the penitent more effectually than severity or even maternal authority.

Madge lagged behind, still affecting a stubborn resistance toward those who desired to return her to the fold. She was a soiled, tired, whimpering lamb, and heartily glad to be saved in spite of herself; yet she thought she would be lacking in dignity if she yielded too easily and acknowledged herself conquered in her little battle for freedom. However, her small comedy of opposition was very transparent, and even Seraph felt that Madge did not mean it when she protested that she did not wish to return home, that she had left home for-

ever, and if they insisted on taking her back, she would go where they would never find her.

To all of which Monsieur Nardi replied quietly, "*Oh, pas ça, ma chère, pas ça.* You don't mean what you are saying, and you don't know what you are doing."

When they reached Madame Blumenthal's door, Seraph could scarcely persuade Madge to enter, for suddenly she seemed overwhelmed with shame, and hung back in the greatest confusion.

"Come in, dear child, come to me; I want to talk to you," called Louise, in her sweet, persuasive tones. "Come to me just as Seraph does when she is unhappy." And the little invalid held out her arms.

Madge could not resist that invitation of heartfelt tenderness. With another burst of tears, and a great sob, she threw herself beside Madame Blumenthal, and hiding her swollen, smudgy little face in her grimy hands, she confessed herself subdued, if not conquered, and heartily sick of the freedom she had longed for.

"And now, my dear child," said Louise, after she had soothed and petted the little penitent until she was somewhat composed, "your mother is very

anxious and unhappy, and you must go to her as soon as possible. She loves you. Never doubt her love again, and she will take you into her heart and forgive you freely. Be patient and docile, even if you are crossed and thwarted, and some day you will learn, as I have, that what seems a cruelty is often a blessing in disguise. Cheer up, poor little heart; go to your parents in a spirit of submission and love, and all will be well. Now, dear, bathe your face and eyes, and won't you, *chérie*, to please me, take off those red ribbons, and that bunch of roses from your hat. You are a good, modest little girl, and I am sure you don't wish to look common and vulgar. You are not old enough to wear such gaudy colors. And let me trim your fringe a little, to show your forehead, and this rough tangle at the end of your braid is very untidy. There! now you look like a little lady."

Madge suffered herself to be despoiled without a murmur, and so contrite was she that she even regretted having sacrificed her front hair to her spirit of insubordination; but her regrets in that direction were useless. She could not restore her fawn-colored locks to their original condition. B

you must go to her as you. Never doubt her take you into her heart. Be patient and docile, and thwarted, and some have, that what seems a in disguise. Cheer up, our parents in a spirit of all will be well. Now, and eyes, and won't you, off those red ribbons, and your hat. You are a and I am sure you don't and vulgar. You are not gaudy colors. And let little, to show your fore- gle at the end of your here! now you look like a

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Louise reassured her by telling her that the fringe was pretty and modest when cut a proper length, and she was sure that Madame Arnet would not object to it.

Ever since she could remember, Madge had longed for a fringe; therefore she felt that she had gained one small victory, even if the skirmish had been disastrous.

Returning to the fold was a terrible ordeal for the little penitent; but it had to be done before she could expect pardon and peace. Strengthened by Louise's sensible advice, and encouraged by Seraph's confidence in Cousin Franz's promise, Madge turned her face homeward, a sadder and a wiser child. She would not allow Seraph to accompany her. She felt that the meeting and reconciliation would be more effective without spectators.

Before she reached the gate of her home, she saw her mother pacing the front gallery restlessly, stopping, now and then, to look into the street with an air of anxious expectancy.

Madge never could remember just what took place; but before the gate was fairly closed behind her, she was clasped in her mother's arms, and

they were crying together. Then her papa came forward and kissed her gravely, but kindly, and very little was said; but the penitent child felt the full blessing of pardon and reconciliation.

That evening, when Madge was again in her own little white room, her mother came in softly, and almost timidly, and after assisting in the preparations for night, a thing she had not done since the child was old enough to unbutton her own frocks, she said with a little tremor in her voice, "Perhaps I have been too severe, perhaps I have dressed you too plain; but you know a minister's wife should set a good example to her husband's congregation. However, my dear, I have thought it over, and I have decided to buy you a new frock and a Leghorn hat, but I think blue would be more becoming than pink."

"Perhaps so, mamma; just as you like," was Madge's humble reply.

About that time the feminine portion of Mr. Arnet's congregation began to remark on the improved appearance of the minister's wife and daughter. Louise, who felt that she might do a little missionary work, by introducing the religion of beauty into a heart ignorant of its refining

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influence, presented Cousin Rachel with one of the
charming flower-bonnets which her little fingers
fashioned so exquisitely, and when Madame Arnet
placed the dainty wreath of violets on her pale
brown hair, she looked ten years younger, and so
well that Madge exclaimed admiringly:

"Oh, mamma! how pretty you look! It suits
you perfectly. Now you must have a gown of
violet silk and black lace to wear with it."

Madame Arnet readily accepted the suggestion.
Her eyes were open at last to the dignity and
charm of a suitable and becoming toilet, and even
the austere Franz was forced to admit that, when
one could afford it, there were many advantages
in being well dressed.

Lying dormant in many characters is a spark
of love for the beautiful, which, when once fanned
to a flame, burns brighter from having been so
long repressed. This seemed to be the case with
Madame Arnet. She not only dressed more be-
comingly and more fashionably, but she made her
house more attractive by adding many little orna-
ments and refinements which she had always con-
sidered frivolous and useless; and Madge was
allowed to do china painting, and to dabble in

water colors to her heart's content. After a while even the objectionable music and German, when it was no longer compulsory, became a pleasure; and Professor Vortman was heard to declare that his pupil had a fair chance of getting beyond mediocrity.

Every day the friendship between Madge and Seraph grew stronger and more tender. Seraph had proved a trustworthy friend in the hour of adversity. She had kept the secret, and managed the reconciliation so well that Madge could never forget to be grateful. And now life was so much sweeter and brighter to the child since the religions of beauty and duty were combined.

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XXXII.

MAURICE AND SHYLOCK.

THE three years of Seraph's training with Professor Vortman were nearly over, and already he was discussing the necessity of foreign study for the little violiniste.

"It is absolutely necessary," he would say in his strong, urgent voice. "She must have another master; she must study in a foreign school."

To the frail little mother, who was satisfied with her present condition, but could see no prospect of improving it, foreign study for her child seemed simply an impossibility. Through Madame St. Maxent's influence, she had built up an excellent business. Still, by constant labor, often assisted by Seraph, she could earn only enough for their daily needs. How, then, could she give up her work, her only means of subsistence, and live in Paris with her child? Besides, her crippled condition made travelling a serious difficulty.

Seraph was growing more beautiful every day,

and there was no doubt that she had rare musical talent. The few who had heard her play felt it. Madame St. Maxent and Maurice were enthusiastic about her; and already her fame had gone abroad, for they had spoken of her to their friends as a prodigy, and at any time a large audience would have been delighted to listen to her; but Professor Vortman would not hear of her playing in public until she had completed her studies.

Monsieur Nardi and Cousin Franz often discussed the child's future.

"Certainly, she must go to Paris," the old bookseller would say; and it seemed to Cousin Franz as impossible as if he had said, "Certainly, she must make a trip to the moon."

"But it would cost a great deal; she could not go without her mother, and Louise's lameness would make it still more expensive."

"Yes, it would cost more, certainly," replied Monsieur Nardi reflectively; "but then there is the chance of Madame Blumenthal being cured. I feel confident that the celebrated Doctor Duplan could cure her lameness."

"It is true, she might be cured if she were there, but there is no chance of her going. Poor

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little Louise!" and Cousin Franz sighed. "I wish I had the money to send her, but, unfortunately, I am poor."

Then Monsieur Nardi would rub his forehead reflectively, and say in a preoccupied tone, "Yes, yes, they must go. I don't see clearly how it is to be accomplished, but they must go. Seraph's future depends on it. Two years or more in the Paris *conservatoire*, and then what a brilliant future for the *cher petit ange*. Yes, it must be arranged. She must go."

One day Maurice St. Maxent made a tour of all the music shops, bric-a-brac shops, and pawn shops, in New Orleans. He wished to find a certain violin that he had heard of, and that he had reason to believe was in one of the above places.

The morning before he and Seraph had practised together for some time, under the instruction of Professor Vortman. Their duets were charming because of the perfect sympathy between them. They both loved the violin, and when they played, it seemed as if one soul and one hand controlled the instruments. Since Maurice had known Seraph he had grown more ambitious to excel. The child's constant and patient study was a reproof

to him; and he often thought, "Ah, if I had her touch, her feeling, I might become a second Joachim. As it is, I can only try to follow her lead, to emulate her industry and perseverance."

On this occasion, Seraph spoke for the first time to Maurice of her father's violin, the wonderful *del Gesù*.

"A genuine *del Gesù*!" cried Maurice, in astonishment. "Why, I did not think there was one in this city."

"Yes, my papa had one. He came from a family of musicians, and it had been for a long time in the family. I never shall play as well on any other violin," she said sadly.

"Why, what became of it?" asked Maurice, greatly interested.

"It was sold," returned Seraph briefly.

"And don't you know who bought it?"

"No, Cousin Franz did not tell me. I think I didn't care to know, I was so unhappy at losing it."

"I don't wonder," said Maurice, with ready sympathy. "One doesn't come across a *del Gesù* every day. It was horrible to sell it. Mr. Arnet could not have known its value."

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"Oh, yes, he knew that it was worth a great deal, but it was a necessity," returned Seraph, her cheeks flushing hotly.

Maurice said no more, but he determined to find the purchaser of the del Gesù. First, he called on Cousin Franz and learned the name of the dealer who had bought it. Then he went to his establishment, but the member of the firm who had negotiated the sale with Cousin Franz was at that time in Europe, and there was no one who could give him any precise information.

However, as he was about leaving the shop, somewhat disappointed at his failure to learn the name of the purchaser, a young clerk entered who remembered the transaction. His employer had sold the violin to a French violinist named Felix, who had formerly played with Carl Blumenthal, and who knew the value of the instrument. This artist had bought it as a speculation, intending to take it abroad, where such a rare instrument would command a high price. Whether he had done so the clerk could not say, as after they sold the violin they heard no more about it.

Maurice St. Maxent was not a boy to be easily discouraged, so he immediately hunted up the

conducteur of the orchestra in which the violinist had played, who remembered Felix perfectly, but he had left New Orleans two years before under unpleasant circumstances. He had always been a dissipated, reckless fellow, who had wasted his money and made debts right and left. He knew Felix had bought Carl Blumenthal's violin, because he believed it to be a Guarneri; but for that matter he, the leader of the orchestra, thought one good violin as valuable as another. Therefore, he considered that *égarré* Felix insane to put all he could get hold of in that old instrument.

There had been a great deal of talk about it at the time. He had been obliged to discharge the violinist, and after that had seen nothing of him; but he had heard that when Felix got into trouble he had sold or pledged the violin. To whom or where he could not say; however, he thought it likely he had pledged it instead of selling it, as he would be unwilling to give up all claim to so valuable an instrument after he had made such an effort to get possession of it.

"I shouldn't wonder, my young friend," added the *conducteur*, "that if you search the pawn shops down town, you'll come across it. Felix has never

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returned since he left, and it's likely to be just
where he placed it. If it is, you'll get it for
what they loaned on it; and it won't be much,
for those people don't appreciate things greatly be-
yond their intrinsic value."

Maurice thanked the *conducteur* for his valuable
information, and went away determined to continue
his search. After spending the best part of the
day going from one obscure place to another, he
came upon a dingy pawn shop on Bourbon Street,
kept by an old Shylock who looked as if he had
stepped out of the Middle Ages. It was not a
promising place to look for anything of value, but
Maurice remembered that it is the unexpected
which oftenest happens, so he entered, not without
some qualms, so dingy and dark was the place,
and so sinister was the appearance of its occupant,
who, however, came forward fawning servility.

"Gute tay, my vriend. What can I do vor you?"

"Good day, monsieur," said Maurice politely, while
he glanced about in a cursory sort of way. "I am
interested in curios, antiques; I was passing and I
just looked in to see what you have."

"Much, much, my vriend; all here is curio, all
here is antique, and faluable, faluable," he replied,

with a comprehensive sweep of the hand, and a voracious cunning in his bead-like eyes.

"Yes, I see," said Maurice, glancing from one thing to another with an amateurish air, and occasionally pricing a bit of trash, to which he would not give house room.

The old Jew, judging from the boy's dress that he was rich, and thinking that he had an easy victim in one so young and inexperienced, plied him with the few articles of value which he possessed, urging and pleading in the most vehement way that he would buy something of his "valuable collection, for the love of heaven, as he was poor, fery poor."

After sufficiently exciting the old man's cupidity by displaying a fat pocket-book, which he took out for the apparent purpose of consulting a memorandum, Maurice turned toward the door, saying carelessly, "Yes, monsieur, you have some good things, but nothing I care to buy to-day. I will call again."

But before the boy could reach the door, the Jew was at his side, holding out his claw-like hands imploringly. "My vriend, my gute young vriend, you hafe not seen all my antiques. I hafe yet

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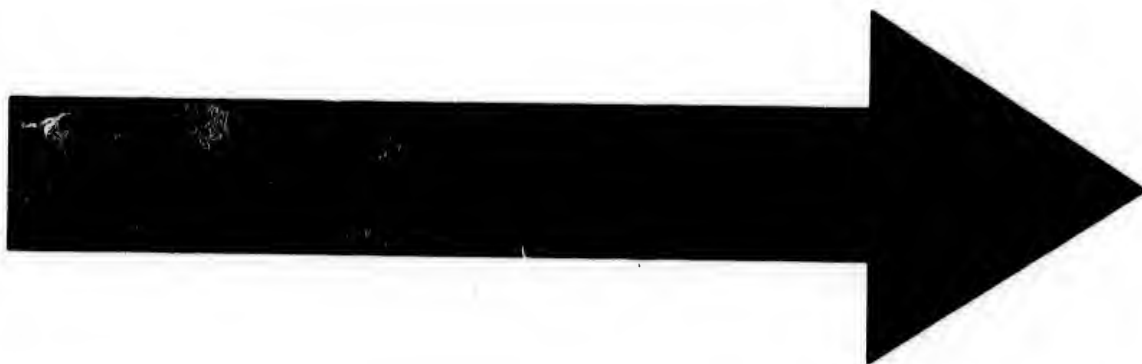
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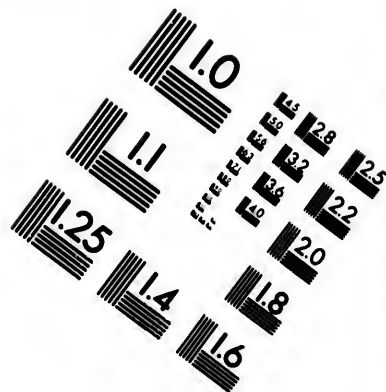
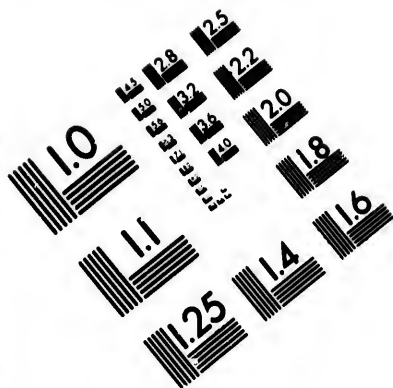
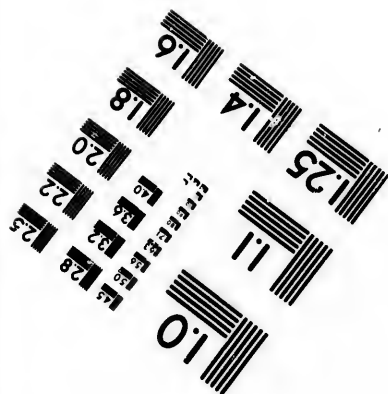
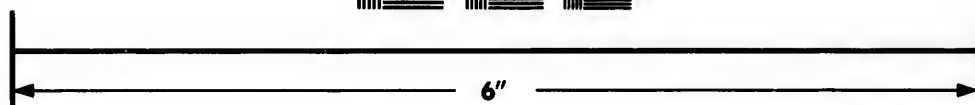
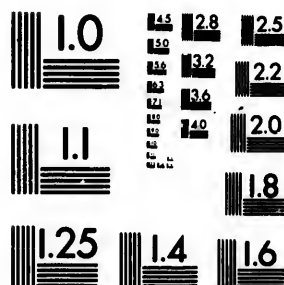


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to show you von fery rare fiolin. Vill you vait while I show it to you?"

Maurice almost shuddered at the clutching fingers; he was near the door and he felt a strong desire to escape, but at the mention of the violin, he turned back, saying, with well-assumed indifference, "I am afraid it is not one I should care for, but I don't mind looking at it."

The old man ran behind the counter, still keeping his eyes on the boy, as if he feared he might give him the slip, and get out before he could prevent it. Taking a big bunch of keys from the pocket of the old dressing-gown he wore, he proceeded to unlock a heavy chest, from which, after rummaging some minutes, he drew out an old violin and laid it before the boy.

On the under part of the neck of the instrument was a small silver plate, worn thin with age, and on it was engraved in nearly effaced letters, "Gustav Blumenthal, Berlin, 1727," and underneath, in newer characters, "C. B. 1868."

"There, my vriend, you see how old this fiolin is," he exclaimed, eagerly pointing with his grimy finger. "This fahuable fiolin vos made in Berlin in 1727, more than von hundred years ago, by a

vamous fiolin-maker, Gustav Blumenthal. This fiolin is von vamous Blumenthal. Look at it, my vriend, look at it."

Maurice could scarcely control his usually steady young nerves, as he turned the instrument and examined it for the mark of the maker. Yes, there it was, the peculiar Guarnieri seal. It was the del Gesù, beyond a doubt.

"Look at it vell, examine it," urged the Jew. "It is von vamous fiolin."

"Oh, I'm afraid I'm not a judge," said Maurice, putting the instrument down with an air of indifference. "I have a little friend who's learning to play; she wants a violin. I daresay it might suit her."

"Puy it vor her, puy it!" interrupted the old man eagerly. "I vill sell it sheap, vor nothing; there, for nothing." As he spoke he shrugged his shoulders, and spread out his hands, palms downward.

"You don't mean that you will *give* it to me?" laughed Maurice.

"The same, my vriend, the same. Von French fiddler pledged it more than two year—two year and I hafe not seen my gute money. He borrowed

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It would take too long to repeat in detail all
the bargaining that took place between Maurice
and Shylock. The *finesse* employed on both sides
would furnish a chapter useful to a diplomat.
However, for once, Shylock was hoisted by his
own petard. Not knowing the real value of his
property, he tried to give it a fictitious value by
declaring that it was "von vamous Blumenthal
of Berlin, made in 1727," which date was probably
the year when it came into the possession of Carl's
great-grandfather, Gustav Blumenthal.

This undervaluation delighted Maurice, as it
made it possible for him to purchase the violin.
After something like an hour's parleying, and when
he had been induced to return at least a dozen
times, he finally left with the Guarnieri, wrapped
in greasy paper, under his arm, and a collapsed
notebook in his pocket. Maurice got the violin,
but Shylock got every dollar the boy had with
him, and double the sum that he had loaned to
Felix, the former owner.

XXXIII.

A LITTLE ROMANCE.

PROFESSOR VORTMAN had been sitting with Madame Blumenthal for an hour or more, trying to impress upon her mind, already burdened with the same subject, the importance of Seraph's studying abroad. "I have carried her as far as I can," he said candidly. "I really can't *teach* her any longer. She is going beyond me. Her technique is excellent. Now, all she needs is style and finish, and that she can get only in a foreign school. My dear madame, it is of the utmost importance. Her future success depends upon it."

"Yes, I know, I understand fully," returned Louise piteously. "But what can I do? I have not the money to take her to Paris, and I am so helpless. If I were well, I might do something; as it is, there is no possibility of my being able to earn it."

"Certainly, madame, I understand your position. I see that you cannot accomplish it alone; but

could not your friends—those interested in Mademoiselle—would not they assist in carrying out our plans?"

"Oh, no! please don't speak of that. I could not be indebted to charity for my child's musical education!" exclaimed the invalid tremulously. "There is no one but Cousin Franz on whom I have any claim, and he is not able. I could not accept such a favor from a stranger."

"Would you not accept a loan? It could be repaid later."

"That would be worse than charity. I should not be honest if I borrowed money which I know I could never repay."

"But your daughter could repay it herself," urged the professor. "She has a great future before her, and that means wealth. She will soon be able to earn money through her own efforts."

"I could not have her begin life hampered with debt. It would be a cruelty to one of her proud, sensitive nature," returned Louise decidedly.

"Then I can think of no means of assisting Mademoiselle to complete her studies," said Professor Vortman a little impatiently, as he went away.

A little later, Monsieur Nardi and the professor were closeted in earnest conversation, which ended by the old bookseller saying, "*Eh bien, mon ami*, you have done all you can. I wanted you to sound her a little; I wanted to know how she would take it. Yes, she is proud, very proud. She is an honest, self-respecting little woman, and I think the more of her for it; but I must try to make her feel that she must yield some of her pride for the child's good as well as for her own."

Seraph had gone to take tea with Madame St. Maxent, and Louise was alone in the twilight, thinking very sadly of her interview with Professor Vortman, when Romeo knocked at her door, and told her that Monsieur Nardi was waiting to see her. "Ah, I am so glad; I need him just at this moment," thought Louise. "I can talk to him, and he will understand how hard it is for me."

When the old gentleman entered, one quick glance into the invalid's tear-stained face told him that she was very unhappy and anxious. "Poor child; poor little woman," he thought; "she must not be troubled any longer. I must take this matter in my own hands and settle it for her."

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So he said cheerily, "All alone? Seraph not here? *C'est bon*; I want to have a quiet, friendly talk with you, my child."

"How good you are," exclaimed Louise, her face brightening, and a smile shining through her tears. "You must have known that I was in trouble and needed a friend. Professor Vortman has been here talking about our going abroad, and I am so worried, so perplexed."

"Yes, *ma chère*, yes; but don't let that worry you. I have arranged all that, and you have only to consent to go."

"But the money, *cher ami*. Where is the money to come from?" asked Louise, looking puzzled and frightened. Was her old friend losing his senses?

"The money? Oh, the money. Why, Seraph has the money. *L'Oncle 'Nidas* made his will to-day, all regular, and legal, done before a notary, and left twenty thousand dollars to Mademoiselle Seraph Blumenthal and her heirs forever. She can't inherit it until Leonidas Nardi dies, and that, I hope, will not be for some time. But *l'Oncle 'Nidas* has the care of her little fortune, and he will constitute himself her guardian, with

her mother's permission, of course, and this same Uncle 'Nidas has decided to send his ward to Paris, to the *conservatoire*, for two or three years, *et voilà tout.*"

Louise was too much surprised to find speech. She could only stare helplessly at the old bookseller, who was patting her hand and laughing softly. At length with a sob she cried, "Dear friend! Good, noble soul! Ah, you crush me with your kindness, but I can't take it; I must not take it. We must not rob you in your old age."

"Yes, that's it. It's just because I am old that I can do this. I have a nice little fortune, and I have not long to enjoy it. Some one must have it when I am done with it, and I have only these two children, just these two in the whole world to leave it to: Seraph and Marc. They are both very dear to me, and they are mine because I love them. Marc will have my name, a name I have tried not to disgrace, and he will succeed me in business, and a nice little amount of money beside. I have divided it pretty equally between the two; so, my dear friend, your child is fairly independent. Now I only wait your consent to go to Paris with Seraph. Professor Vortman leaves

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next month for a visit to Europe; he will take charge of you, and Madame St. Maxent knows of an excellent woman to serve you. A French steamer, with good accommodations, sails for Havre from this port early next month. Feeling sure that you would agree to my wishes, I took the liberty to engage passage for you and Seraph and your maid."

Louise looked around the little room, at her familiar furniture, at her table covered with her pretty work, and covering her face with her hands she sobbed convulsively: "Oh, my friend—you are good; you are angelic; but it is like tearing me up by the roots. I am so lame and helpless. How can I leave my little room where I am so comfortable, so contented? How can I give up everything to go so far from my only, my best friends?"

A few tears crept into the corners of Monsieur Nardi's eyes, but he brushed them quickly away, and said in the same light, cheerful tone: "*Soyez tranquille, ma chère; calmez-vous.* It will not be long, and you will return well and happy and find everything just as you leave it."

"How can that be? I cannot expect to keep

this cottage," returned Louise, wiping her eyes, and trying to regain her composure.

"Why not? It is yours. Leonidas Nardi bought this cottage a few days ago, and to-day in his will he left it to you for your life, to go to Seraph if she survives you. Romeo will take care of it during your absence, and when you return, you will find your home ready for you."

"I don't understand, I can't understand, how you can be so good to us, who are almost strangers to you," said Louise, looking gratefully into the old bookseller's gentle face.

Something in the limpid, troubled depths of her eyes made him turn away from their gaze. Then he said softly, and almost solemnly: "My child, let me tell you what made my heart tender toward you. I once had a great sorrow. I was a boy, a poor, homely boy, but I had a nature that craved affection, and I had no parents, no sisters, no one to fill my hungry heart. Ignorant and obscure though I was I dared to love one as far above me as heaven is above earth. She never knew I loved her, but she did not scorn my humble devotion; she was my friend, and her goodness and purity ennobled me.

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"For her I became ambitious. I studied, I
toiled, I hoarded, to make myself worthy of her.
One day I learned that she was to marry the man
of her choice. Then, poor foolish boy that I was,
I thought life was over for me. My sun seemed to
have gone out at noon; but I struggled out of the
darkness and dared to live. The memory of her
friendship, her kindness, made it possible. That
was more than forty years ago. Since then for
her sake I have loved all who suffer, and especially
you, my child; for the woman I adored was your
mother, the good and beautiful Marie Paulette."

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XXXIV.

PREPARATION.

AS soon as it was known that through Monsieur Nardi's generosity Seraph was enabled to go to Paris to complete her musical education, her friends were anxious to assist her in every way possible.

For some time Madame St. Maxent and Maurice had been thinking of a plan by which they could give the little violiniste some substantial token of their admiration and good will, and they had decided to have, shortly before her departure, a *soirée musicale* for her benefit.

Professor Vortman and Maurice entered heart and soul into the details. Professor Vortman was to accompany them, and for once Seraph was to appear before the public in a solo, and afterward in a duet with Maurice. Madame St. Maxent had engaged a celebrated singer to add the charm of vocal music, and altogether a delightful programme was arranged.

The days preceding the sailing of the steamer were busy days in the little cottage. There was so much to do, and so much to be thought of, that the poor little invalid was almost overwhelmed with the weight of her new responsibilities. In the emergency Cousin Franz, Madame Arnet, and Madge came forward with hearty good will, and did their share toward completing the arrangements. Cousin Rachel, with sensible forethought, made warm woollen gowns for the invalid, and a thick cloak and hood for Seraph to wear in stormy weather on the deck of the ship; Cousin Franz bought them comfortable deck chairs, and had a hamper packed with many little delicacies to tempt Louise's feeble appetite; and Madge made them each the handiest toilet-cases, fitted up neatly with all the necessary articles. Every one was interested and ready to do something to speed the voyagers on their way. Cressy and Romeo displayed much culinary skill in making cakes, bon-bons, and sugared fruits, in such large quantities that one would have thought the little party bound for a land where these tempting edibles were unknown; and Marc spent all his spare time in going over books for girls in order to select those which he thought Seraph would like best.

During these preparations, Monsieur Nardi found his days full of new duties, and sometimes his heart was very heavy at the thought of losing Seraph, for the dear little maid was the sunshine of his life; but he had Marc, and Marc was a great comfort to him.

The boy was developing well. He had refined perceptions and intuitions, and such a retentive memory that he profited by all he heard and saw. Maurice St. Maxent was his *beau ideal* of boyish perfection; therefore he tried to be as much like him as he possibly could, and Monsieur Nardi encouraged him in all his little ambitions. A father was never more devoted to an only son than was the old bookseller to the son of his adoption. Their affection and admiration for each other seemed to equalize, in a manner, their years. Marc became more mature in order to reach up to his benefactor, and Uncle 'Nidas, in his happiness, was often boyishly bright and companionable.

When Patsy saw them walking on the levee, side by side, as they often did, talking earnestly and intimately, he would say to himself in mute admiration, "He is as fine a lad as if he had been born in a palace. Who would o' thought

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hissself all over in a few years. I'm proud of him,
that I am, an' we're jes' as chummy as ever. He
ain't spoilt a bit 'cause he goes to school an'
wears good togs. I al'ays know'd he'd make a
fine man, an' be a credit to me."

Patsy felt a sort of ownership in Marc, seeing
that he had been the guide and protector of his
infancy, and had taught him the rudiments of
the knowledge which was leading to such lofty
results; and he scarcely allowed a day to pass
without congratulating the boy on his good fortune
in finding such a friend as Monsieur Nardi, usually
ending his kindly comments with the same little
set phrase: "I al'ays know'd you'd make a man,
if you only had half a chance."

Not long before the *soirée musicale*, and just
when Louise was debating in her mind what *toi-
lette* would be suitable for the little violiniste to
wear on the important occasion, Madame St. Max-
ent called in her carriage and took Seraph away
to Hortense, a fashionable *modiste*, the same Hor-
tense who sold the silver jewel box that belonged
to Lady Jane's mother.

"Here is a little friend," said Madame St. Max-

ent pleasantly, when Hortense entered, all smiles and bows, "for whom I want a white costume—all white—and the daintiest and prettiest that can be made. It must be a very simple and a very artistic creation. I'm sure you understand perfectly, and know exactly what I wish."

"Will Mademoiselle please to remove her hat?" And Hortense stood off and examined Seraph critically, who, under the close scrutiny, blushed a soft pink over all her delicate little face.

"Mademoiselle's coloring is uncommon, but it is charming. Golden hair, brown eyes, and a clear, pale complexion; but in the evening, with artificial light and a little excitement, she will be pink, as she is now. Well, we will select pure white chiffon, over a white surah slip, white silk stockings, and white shoes of *gros grain* silk."

"I should think that would be charming," said Madame St. Maxent approvingly.

"And would Madame like tiny buckles of rhinestone on the shoes?" asked Hortense, walking around, and looking at Seraph from another point of view.

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pered Seraph. "I know mamma would not like me to wear them."

Madame St. Maxent smiled indulgently. "No, no buckles; plain white shoes, — not slippers, — tied with a tiny bow on the instep; and the frock is to be high, and the sleeves long, very simple and childlike."

"*Oui, oui, madame*; I understand perfectly. Mademoiselle will be charming in the *toilette* I shall send her. It will be a dream, a perfect dream."

Then Madame St. Maxent walked apart with Hortense, and gave her some orders in a low voice: "*A costume du voyage*, — frock, hat, and coat; take the measure now, and send it with the white *toilette*. I wish the color to be brown. Select the material you think the most suitable; but simple, very simple."

After Madame St. Maxent finished her business with Hortense, she took Seraph home with her, in order that she and Maurice might practise the duet for the *soirée musicale*. Professor Vortman was there to play an accompaniment, and after they had rehearsed each part over and over, until they played it without a fault, they lunched mer-

rily in a corner of the gallery, and while they laughed and chatted over their fruit and ices, the soft wind, fragrant with roses and jasmine, fanned them, and happy birds fluttered among the flowers, singing as though life were all spring, and youth, and joy.

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XXXV.

A SOIRÉE MUSICALE.

WHEN Seraph was dressed for the *soirée musicale*, in the dainty white costume that Madame St. Maxent had ordered for her, she looked like a lovely little fairy. The soft folds of chiffon clung to her slender figure like the silken down of a thistle; her small, usually pale face was flushed a tender pink, and her beautiful hair hung below her waist like a veil of spun gold.

Madame Blumenthal was delighted with the delicate richness and refinement of Madame St. Maxent's selection. It suited her artistic taste, and enhanced the beauty and grace of the child. Cressy and Romeo were as interested in Seraph's appearance, as though they were to *assist* at the important function, and their expressions of admiration were original as well as forcible. "Miss Seraph, honey, yer suttently does look like yer jes' wants wings ter fly away," cried Romeo, clasping his gnarled old hands reverently. "I's neber seed

a live angel, or no oder angel, ter tell der trufe, 'til jes' dis yere min'it, an' I neber s'pects ter see anuder 'til I's done got ter heaben. Now, Miss Cressy, don't yer 'gree wid me dat my lit'l' Miss am a mighty lubely chile?"

"Yes, Romeo, yes, *elle est charmante*." And Cressy's grim old face relaxed in a smile of complete satisfaction. "She will do Monsieur Leonidas, and all of us, a great deal of credit."

Then Uncle 'Nidas had to be brought in to look at the little fairy. "*Très bien; très bien*. It is wonderful. *Ah, chérie*, what can I say? You are perfect, simply perfect." And Monsieur Nardi's happy face showed his pride and gratification.

When he returned to his shop he remarked that there was only one thing lacking in the perfection of Seraph's *toilette*, and he suggested to Marc that he ought to present his little friend with a bunch of flowers. The boy needed only a hint; hastening off to a fashionable florist, he soon returned with a cluster of lovely white rose-buds, which he presented to Seraph, blushing furiously. He was unaccustomed to the little amenities of life, but he took to them gracefully and naturally.

Madame St. Maxent sent her carriage early for

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the little party, so that Louise could be assisted in and comfortably seated before the other guests arrived.

"We are off at last," cried Seraph joyfully, as the carriage turned into Rue Royale. "I am so glad; I want to be there; I want to play. My fingers are impatient to begin. You will hear, Uncle 'Nidas, you will hear, *petite maman*, how well, how beautifully, I shall play. With all the flowers, and the lights, and the *toilettes du soir*, it will be like my old concerts, and I shall be just as happy as when I wore a train and played for Romeo, while he sat under the oleander and threw flowers to me when I finished."

When they arrived at Madame St. Maxent's the children were wildly excited at the festive appearance of the beautiful house and grounds.

"Chinese lanterns among the trees and flowers!" cried Marc, thrusting his head out of the carriage window to get a better view.

"And the house is a blaze of light; it looks like a palace of rose and yellow crystal!" exclaimed Seraph enraptured.

"Ah, it is like fairy-land!" said Louise. Some of the glamour of old days was upon her, and it

seemed as if it were she, and not her child, who was to appear before an expectant audience.

When they entered the great salon, where they were received by Madame St. Maxent and Maurice, they glanced around a little timidly, almost bewildered by the light, the color, the glitter, the perfume of flowers, spread and twined and festooned over every available place; the rich drapery, the pictures and rare ornaments, and Madame St. Maxent, herself, looking like a queen in a gown of yellow satin, her corsage and dark hair sparkling with diamonds.

"Ah! my dear friends," she exclaimed, in her warm, cheery tones, "I am so happy to receive you. Come to this comfortable corner. Here is an easy-chair placed expressly for our *chère petite* invalid, and another, a chair of state, for *mon ami, monsieur*, the scholar; and Marc, who will want to see his little friend to the best advantage, can take this chair on the other side of Madame Blumenthal."

At that moment another group entered,—Cousin Franz, Madame Arnet, and Madge. Cousin Franz looked as prosperous and dignified as a minister who is winning popularity ought to. And Cousin

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Rachel wore one of Hortense's most artistic costumes of mauve satin and black lace, while Madge was a picture of modesty and simplicity in a simple white frock, her little fawn-colored head as sleek and glossy as her mother's gown.

Madame St. Maxent met them with the same charming cordiality: "Now, my friends, our little group is complete. Here are seats for you near our dear invalid; I know you will enjoy being together. Very soon the rooms will be crowded, and I may not be able to get near you. It is to be a great occasion," she whispered to Cousin Franz. "I have invited every one. I have interested all my friends. There are to be no tickets. You see, they all know it is a benefit for our dear little violiniste, and I leave it to the generosity of my guests to give what they please. I have placed a pretty basket, not too small, on that table near the door where Maurice's tutor is sitting. Every one can deposit in it what he or she is willing to give. Ah! I am sure when they hear the *chère petite* play, they will all empty their pockets. I am expecting a perfect ovation."

Madame St. Maxent had given Seraph one admiring glance. She had been so occupied re-

ceiving her guests that she had had no opportunity to express her satisfaction with Hortense's creation. Now she turned to the child, who was talking with Maurice, and said gaily, "Ah! mademoiselle, you are charming! you *are* a dream! I am satisfied. It is all perfect. Now, my young artists, you must go to the music-room before our other guests arrive. When every one is quietly seated, this curtain will be drawn," she said, pointing to the rich *portière* which separated the music-room from the salon, "and the music will begin. After the concert there will be an informal reception and a little supper, *et voilà tout*."

When Seraph and Maurice entered the music-room, they found Professor Vortman pacing the floor a little nervously. It was a very important occasion to him; two of his most promising pupils were to play for the first time before an audience, and he was anxious for his own reputation, as well as for theirs, that they should acquit themselves with distinction.

"Allow me to congratulate you, mademoiselle," he said, with pleased surprise. "When you appear before your audience, they will think they see Queen Titania."

Seraph smiled; she did not know who Queen

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Titania was, but she felt that her master was pleased with her appearance.

"Yes, they will think they see Queen Titania, but they will know that they *hear* an angel," returned Maurice, with boyish gallantry. "Now, Seraph, let us get our fiddles and see that they are in tune while we are waiting for the crowd to be seated. Just hear how they are rushing in! What a hubbub a lot of people make! Mamma's friends must have turned out in full force."

Near the piano was a platform, just high enough so that those at the far end of the salon could see the young violinists. It was covered with a rich rug, and ornamented with jars of growing palms, their dark, glossy foliage making a lovely background for the slender white figure with its veil of golden hair. On the platform was a table draped with a silken cover, and at one corner stood a large Eastern jar filled with rare flowers; near the jar lay Seraph's violin.

"Come, mademoiselle," said Maurice laughingly. "Allow me." And taking Seraph by the fingertips, he led her on to the little stage.

Professor Vortman came forward, watching every movement eagerly.

"How beautiful everything is!" Seraph exclaimed, raising her happy eyes to Maurice, as she took the violin from the table. Before she had looked at it or fairly touched it, she felt its presence. With one bewildered glance she cried, "This is papa's violin! this is the del Gesù! Where did it come from? How did it get here?"

Maurice laughed a little to hide his emotion, and holding out his hand with boyish frankness, said, "I am the good fairy who put it there. I searched for it, I found it, I bought it, and now I present it to Mademoiselle with my life-long devotion."

Seraph could not speak. She could not thank him with words, and she did not wish him to see the tears that started to her eyes; tears of mingled joy and gratitude. Holding the violin in her arms, she turned away her tremulous face, trying hard to recover her composure. When she had succeeded, she said sweetly and simply:

"This makes me perfectly happy. My heart is too full to thank you now, Maurice, but when I play the allegro in my solo, you will know how glad I am to have my dear violin again."

A half-hour later, when the large audience was seated and the murmur of voices had softened t

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expectant whispers, the curtain was drawn aside, and Professor Vortman played a selection from Liszt with great success. Then Madame Estrès sang a new song, and afterward the little violiniste appeared amid deafening applause.

Madame St. Maxent's guests thought they had never seen a prettier picture than she made when Maurice led her on to the stage, and they certainly had never listened to more delicious strains than the child drew from the wonderful instrument. When she came to the allegro in her solo, she pressed her little inspired face closer to the violin, which fairly throbbed with joy. It was like exultant heavenly voices, a whole choir of child angels singing songs of praise and thanksgiving.

Maurice understood it, and felt the child's gratitude to be stronger than words could express, and the audience listened spell-bound. As the last tender, delicate strain died away, the violin slipped from her shoulder, the bow hung loosely in her fingers, while she glanced around like one just awakened from a delightful dream, her eyes wide and full of light, and her lips smiling tremulously. Then bowing timidly and gracefully, she took Maurice's hand and turned away amid an enthusiastic burst of applause.

There was another selection by Professor Vortman, and then more singing, and by that time the audience was impatient for the violin duet by Seraph and Maurice, which was played exquisitely, in perfect harmony, and with much delicacy of expression.

Madame St. Maxent was delighted, and her guests were wildly enthusiastic over the little violiniste. "What genius! what feeling! what vigor! what a touch. It is remarkable! wonderful — angelic!" was heard on every side. It was an unheard-of success, a perfect ovation, and every one present wished to congratulate and compliment the child, who received the pretty things that were said to her modestly and unaffectedly. Her little heart was so full of strong and sweet emotions that she had no room for vanity and self-satisfaction.

The *soirée musicale* was a success in many ways. The tutor who sat near the basket, already generously full of crisp bank notes, noticed that many of those who had given when they entered, returned to make an additional offering.

Madame St. Maxent was much pleased at the success of her plan, and the next day when she placed a great roll of notes in Louise's hand, she

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said, as if the money were a matter of no consequence: "A nice little sum to help Seraph through, but it is the smallest part of the success. She made a reputation last night that will last, and when she returns, people will throng to hear her play. I am satisfied, and so is Professor Vortman. He says her future success is assured, and that is all we can ask."

A few days after the *soirée musicale* a sad-faced little group stood on one of the wharves watching a great ocean steamer pull out into the river. They had come to say good-by to Madame Blumenthal and Seraph, who sat on the deck beside Professor Vortman, looking with tearful eyes toward the shore.

Poor Louise looked pale and dejected. She dreaded going out into the great unknown, and her heart lingered in her little home, and clung to those she loved and was leaving. And Seraph was trying to appear bright and happy as she waved her handkerchief and called *au revoir* as long as her sweet voice could reach their ears.

"Parting is bitter sorrow," said Madame St. Maxent, a little dolefully, "but I always comfort myself with the thought of meeting again."

"And that will be before long," remarked Maurice, his eyes following the ship. "You said this morning that we should be in Paris in a few months."

"Yes, that is my intention now," replied Madame St. Maxent, "and I should not wonder if we spent the next two or three years abroad."

"It is my intention to take another trip next year," said Monsieur Nardi, trying to look cheerful; "I shall need to add to my collection by that time."

"Well, *we* may go too," observed Madame Arnet, looking at Cousin Franz. "Mr. Arnet's father has invited us to visit him, and I think it would be very pleasant to see Paris while Cousin Louise and Seraph are there."

"Yes, it would be very pleasant," returned Cousin Franz, "and I should like to see the fatherland again."

Presently the little group separated, for the faces peering over the rail of the steamer were becoming indistinct blots, and each one went his way sadly, only Monsieur Nardi and Marc remaining until the last trace of the steamer had disappeared around the bend in the river.

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XXXVI.

A LETTER FROM PARIS.

MONSIEUR NARDI had just received a letter from Paris, from Madame Blumenthal, and Madge had come in to hear the news.

"Yes, yes," said the old gentleman, rubbing his hands gleefully. "They are already on their way, and they ought to be here about the first of next month. You see they had to come by the way of New York, because Madame St. Maxent and Maurice won't travel by our line of steamers. They're slow, too slow, and it is very nice for Louise and Seraph to travel in their company."

"And is Cousin Louise still improving?" asked Madge.

"Oh yes, she improves every day. When I left Paris—let me see—that's more than a year ago—"

"Yes," said Madge; "it is a year and a half, for we returned just before you did."

"Well, I suppose it is. I can't keep up with Time. He has wings, and I have only feet, and it

is hard to make myself believe that they have been gone three years. However, as I was saying, when I left Paris, Louise was just beginning to stand without any support. Poor little woman! how delighted she was when she could take a few steps, Seraph on one side and I on the other. Now she can walk short distances without help. The cure is slow, very slow, but Doctor Duplan says she will be perfectly well in a year or so."

Just then Marc came in,—a tall, pleasant-faced lad, who blushed and looked a little shy when he greeted Madge. They had become fast friends during Seraph's absence, and as Madge bought her books and stationery at Monsieur Nardi's shop, they saw each other frequently. And sometimes Marc came to take tea with them, and talk books with Cousin Franz, who had taken a great interest in the bright, clever boy; while Madge, who was growing up a nice, intelligent girl, sat near and listened attentively. The six months she had passed in Europe, the greater part of the time being spent in Germany, gave her a new interest in the language, and she now bids fair to make as good a scholar as Cousin Franz predicted she would before she took it into her stubborn little head to be a *modiste*.

After Madge had talked a few moments with Marc, she turned to Monsieur Nardi, and said, in a very satisfied voice, "Oh! but I have some good news to tell you. Papa's congregation have decided to build him a handsome new church; and it's to be on a fashionable street. You know so many rich people have come in that we are not as poor as we once were, and the old church is far too small for our congregation."

"Ah! that does not surprise me," returned Monsieur Nardi, his good old face reflecting Madge's satisfaction. "I knew it would come soon. Recognition and appreciation are sure to follow talent and industry. Yes, yes, I knew it would come."

"Papa certainly does deserve his popularity; he works so hard, and is so good and conscientious," said Madge proudly. "I don't think his people can do too much for him." Then she turned again to the subject of the letter. "Well, I suppose Seraph has received her diploma and medal from the *Conservatoire*, and is now a full-fledged professor of the violin."

"Yes, indeed, she has," replied Monsieur Nardi, with the greatest satisfaction, "and she is the youngest pupil who has ever received such marks

of distinction. Professor Vortman wrote me of a *soirée musicale* given by Madame St. Maxent, when the most distinguished people in the American colony, as well as many of the French and English aristocracy, with a number of famous composers and professors, heard her play, and she had a great success, a great success. They were enthusiastic about her, and predicted the most brilliant career for her. Ah! she is a lovely, talented child. How can we expect to keep such a rare creature in this obscure little cottage?"

"By the way," laughed Madge, "have the workmen completed the renovation of the 'obscure little cottage'? If they have, and you do not object, mamma and I would like to superintend putting it in order. You know women understand the needs of women so much better than men do."

"Thank you, my dear; that is kind and thoughtful of you. Marc and I have done the best we could; but you and your mother will understand just how Louise and the child will like to find things. I want it all to be just as they left it, as far as it is possible. It will seem more like coming home. Step into the garden and see what has been done there. Romeo and Cressy

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are especially interested in that department, and they are very proud of the improvements."

"Why really, it is lovely!" cried Madge. "You have made this little wilderness blossom like the rose, and the court is charming. How happy Cousin Louise and Seraph will be when they return!"

"Do you think they will be happy, *ma chère*? Oh, I hope they will. Yes, I hope they will. I don't mind telling you, my child, because I am sure you are discreet, but I shouldn't want them to know. Lately, I have worried a great deal for fear Seraph will be discontented and unhappy in this quiet place after living so long in Paris."

"Don't be afraid of that, dear Uncle 'Nidas." He was uncle, now, to Madge, as well as to all the others. "If you have that idea, you don't know Seraph as well as I do. In all her letters she says she loves her little home better than any spot on earth. She is a sweet, sincere girl, and you must remember that she is sixteen, and quite old enough to know her own mind. I know she loves her friends dearly, and you the best of all."

"Thank you, my dear, thank you," returned the old gentleman, with a tremor in his voice.

"Yes, I'm sure the child loves me, but she is so beautiful and talented that I cannot expect to keep her always. She will be known. She will be famous. Genius cannot be hidden. It is the light of the earth. It belongs to humanity, to one's country, to the world."

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